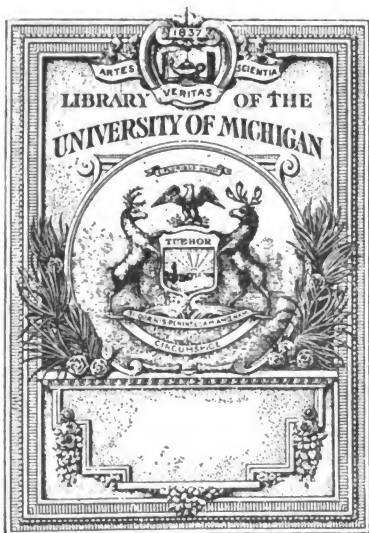


# My kingdom of heaven

Peter Rosegger,  
Mrs. Elizabeth Lee







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# MY KINGDOM OF HEAVEN



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# MY KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

By

PETER ROSEGGER, 1843-1917

*Author of "I N R I"*

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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*Translated by Elizabeth Lee*

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# Contents

	PAGE
<u>CHAPTER I</u>	
<u>I BELIEVE . . . . .</u>	<u>I</u>
<u>CHAPTER II</u>	
<u>CHRIST ON THE HEATH . . . . .</u>	<u>93</u>
<u>CHAPTER III</u>	
<u>CHRISTMASTIDE . . . . .</u>	<u>136</u>
<u>CHAPTER IV</u>	
<u>EASTER . . . . .</u>	<u>149</u>
<u>CHAPTER V</u>	
<u>WHITSUNTIDE . . . . .</u>	<u>162</u>
<u>CHAPTER VI</u>	
<u>SUNDAY . . . . .</u>	<u>173</u>



	PAGE
<u>CHAPTER VII</u>	
<u>CHURCH MUSIC IN THE VILLAGE . . . . .</u>	<u>182</u>
<u>CHAPTER VIII</u>	
<u>PRAYER AND THE COUNTRY PEOPLE . . . . .</u>	<u>187</u>
<u>CHAPTER IX</u>	
<u>FREE FROM ROME ? . . . . .</u>	<u>198</u>
<u>CHAPTER X</u>	
<u>HOW I PICTURE TO MYSELF THE PERSONALITY OF</u> <u>JESUS . . . . .</u>	<u>207</u>
<u>CHAPTER XI</u>	
<u>CONSEQUENCES OF A CONFISCATION . . . . .</u>	<u>219</u>
<u>CHAPTER XII</u>	
<u>CONCERNING BIBLE-READING . . . . .</u>	<u>230</u>
<u>CHAPTER XIII</u>	
<u>BELIEF IN THE DEVIL . . . . .</u>	<u>243</u>
<u>CHAPTER XIV</u>	
<u>THE GUARDIAN ANGEL . . . . .</u>	<u>249</u>



## CONTENTS

vii

PAGE

### CHAPTER XV

<u>THOUGHTS IN SLEEPLESS NIGHTS . . . . .</u>	<u>257</u>
---	------------

### CHAPTER XVI

<u>HUMILITY . . . . .</u>	<u>267</u>
---------------------------	------------

### CHAPTER XVII

<u>HALF-WAY . . . . .</u>	<u>276</u>
---------------------------	------------

### CHAPTER XVIII

<u>AN ATHEIST . . . . .</u>	<u>290</u>
-----------------------------	------------

### CHAPTER XIX

<u>LORD, WE PERISH ! . . . .</u>	<u>298</u>
----------------------------------	------------

### CHAPTER XX

<u>NOTHING CAN HAPPEN TO YOU ! . . . .</u>	<u>310</u>
--	------------

### CHAPTER XXI

<u>WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE IN HEAVEN ? . . . .</u>	<u>319</u>
---	------------



## Chapter I

### I BELIEVE

**I** BELIEVE ! Those were the first words I said on this earth. But I said them at a time when I could not speak, and at a time when I could not believe—as a newborn infant. I then took upon myself a serious vow to resist the devil and to believe in God as the Almighty Creator and Redeemer. By this vow I received baptism, and became a Christian.

Is that a legal compact ? I ask the lawyers who, in matters relating to the law, require a personal affirmation and signature ; I ask the moralists who, in regard to all human acts, good and bad, take consciousness and free-will for granted. I ask : Is it a legal compact that the Church makes with the ignorant child ? Nay, I do not consider that to be binding which my godfather promised on my behalf. I could not believe solely, because he affirmed in my name : “ I believe.” I should not be a Christian merely on the grounds that reception into Christianity was desired and obtained in my name, since I knew nothing of it, it did not happen through my will ; with the awakening of reason I was free, I understood



what was comprehensible; that which was incomprehensible, I could believe or not as I chose.

And yet I believe. And yet I must believe. For in fact the reasoning, the "free" man has no choice whether he will believe or not. Either he knows something, in which case the belief falls away of itself, or he believes something or does not believe it—quite involuntarily. "I will believe it" means the same as "I must believe it"; "I do not believe it" signifies: "I cannot believe it." When there are so many men who purposely shut themselves out from belief, who, for one reason or another, will not believe, because, according to modern ideas, belief is old-fashioned weak-minded or even immoral—they deceive themselves in so far as they imagine they make belief or unbelief dependent on their own wills. They cannot believe. If they could, they would. The commandment, "thou shalt believe," always seems to me brutal and unjust; whereas, on the other hand, I understand the conception of the Church which sees in belief a grace of God. Belief is a grace, granted to one, withheld from another, just as a man is by nature optimistic or sceptical. To the best it is often a seeking, a striving, a doubting, a despairing, a longing for happiness, with no possibility of obtaining it. It is so at the present time when all ideas and conceptions possible rush in upon a man, and he has to find his own way among them according to temperament or chance. It was otherwise in olden



times, when the whole world of human thought and ideas was limited, and entirely adapted to a belief in the supernatural ; then belief was almost spontaneous, it was waiting for man when he came into the world, it received him, so that his faith was assured as soon as his reason awoke. Thus the sponsor can easily promise for the infant : I believe, and the Church is justified in relying on that promise, and in receiving the young believer into its community for all time.

When my reason awoke I discovered such a narrow, uniform world of belief around me. And if I had not, if I had found neither church, nor pulpit, nor altar, nor a pious mother, nor a God-fearing father, I say I should still have been compelled to believe in accordance with my nature. In accordance with my nature. That I cannot of course prove, but I imagine, for example, that the flower, the storm, the starry sky, the mountains, the sea, the whole essence of the universe, would have spoken to me emphatically of " God, eternal life ! " until I could think of nothing else but God, eternal life ! The world would have appeared to me as distinct and comprehensible as the simplest mechanism, I should have understood it clearly from in front, from behind, in its innermost kernel, I should indisputably have known and perceived myself, my origin and my destination ; then knowledge would have been absolute, and belief would have had no part to play. But as absolute



knowledge and comprehension were not obtainable, are not obtainable, and, in spite of all the wise men in the world, never will be obtainable, because we hope and fear, therefore belief existed peremptorily for the optimistic denizen of the world. Thus I believe that my first word and vow has been honoured, although made without my knowledge.

The fanatic for knowledge came up to me angrily : "God and Immortality, prove this to me, thou fool ! "

I quietly answer : " Prove the contrary to me." It is not necessary to throw the fool back at him, because I am sure he thinks as he is able, and that in his own way he is a believer too. For he believes that there is no God, no immortality. And then I can part from the man at once, for I do not need him on the path I intend to traverse, and he as little needs me on his way. I dismiss him as a believer in the above-mentioned sense; if his intentions are good they deserve my esteem.

The views I state here are not intended to stir up a controversy, they are a modest confession of my inner life, for which I claim not only no merit, but admit many faults. I will reveal this inner life with its happiness and its torment, with its tender melancholy, and its contradictions. Whether what I say is the truth I know not, but it is certainly veracious, for I shall reveal my inmost being according to my conscience and my powers of perception. I did not



place myself where I now stand. But the standpoint, is in fact not a bad one. From it a good view of our subject, of our time, can be obtained, and a bond is formed with heavenly things. I do not know whether heavenly conceptions make me better, but they make me happier, as every other spiritual world has the power to do. I have to renounce the honour of being a man who counts for something in the world, who has something to offer society, either as a citizen or as an author ; I have to content myself for the time being with the sight of God's kingdom in the distance. I must also stand back in humility perhaps, before honest sceptics and unbelievers who are heroically striving for the right, who err, fall, and rise again, whilst I remain almost inactive, full of peace, aside in the shadow of the Cross.

Yet I have been a child of the world, passionate in action, impatient in suffering, keen in desire. Even I wished to break a hole in Heaven through my worldly deeds. I was saved from these insolent demons by illness, which attacked my body during many years, and gently released my soul from its material wrappings, making me indifferent to the value of the world, and urging me on the basis of a religious youth and an optimistic outlook to build a kingdom not of this earth. I do not know, of course, whether this kingdom agrees in every point with that founded by the Saviour, and which shall last until the end of time. But it is His light, His light it is which is refracted



through the prison of my being, so that the sunny day is converted into a soft twilight.

I have read an enormous number of books both for and against these mysterious things. I have at times tried to enter into the thoughts both of the free-thinker and of the orthodox believer. It has long troubled me to think that contradictions are to be found in the gospels themselves, and contradictions evidently at variance with the principles of Christ's teaching. I began to compare, to subtilize, to read exeges, and only fell deeper into confusion. Whose was the fault? Mine. I had begun to meddle with the letter, and that destroys faith. The priests, too, who wish to interpret and prove too much, exclude belief. Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* is my favourite among Christian religious books, for it has enlightened and consoled me innumerable times.

But now that, and everything else that I have read, shall be put aside, so that I may be alone with myself. As far as possible I will close my eyes to all light from without; in ignoring the influence of the human wisdom of another, I shall try to come to terms with revelation and myself. If I brought in outside opinions, writings and dogmas, other errors would be added to my own, and the confusion would be more hopeless than ever. I do not desire that people shall always agree with me, I am content if they understand me. I am still a worldly man. I have not wholly escaped contact with sin. Look-



ing earthwards, I feel the fate of the unhappy ; I err, I suffer, I am afraid. But looking up to the stars saves me—I believe.

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.**

A certain count sought a steward for one of his estates. A young man offered himself who possessed great agricultural knowledge, gained apparently at a public high school. He was very proud of himself and was sure that with his knowledge he could make the land yield double and treble, and fill all the granaries. The count knew very well that a practical agriculturist, knowing that rain and sun had to be reckoned with, would not talk quite so confidently, but he said to the aspirant : “ You intend to fill the granaries through your knowledge ? I do not desire that, but shall be content if you can produce a single blade of corn. If you can do that I will make you master of the estate.” The young steward went away smiling confidently. He manured the ground in the most approved scientific manner, ploughed and harrowed it with the newest machines, and sowed the seed. In a few days it sprouted, and in a few months a healthy blade stood there tall as a full-grown man, its fruitful ears already bent. The steward showed his master the blade of corn he had brought forth. “ That’s very nice,” said the count, “ but



the peasant was able to do as much as that a thousand years ago. Or did you accomplish it without a seed ? ”

“ Sir, if that is of any importance to you, I will not take the seed from the ear, I will create it, and let a new blade grow from it so that the work may be mine from beginning to end.” So said the steward in the enthusiasm of his knowledge. Then he went to a mill, took some flour, and kneaded it into a little corn seed, took chaff, and with great cleverness made a husk round the seed. The seed was now ready ; in form and substance it was not to be distinguished from the other seeds. It was put in the ground and cherished and cared for according to all the rules of experience and science ; but it neither sprouted nor grew, it rotted in the earth. “ You may go,” said the count to his steward, “ I prefer to place the Lord God over my estate ; He can make corn-seeds.”

The Almighty Power of God ! The herb-gatherer on the Bärenhöhe was a hypercritical reasoner, and once said to me : “ Listen, God is very powerful, but He is not all-powerful or He would have needed only a moment for the creation of heaven and earth ; He required six days, and it fatigued Him so much that He had to rest on the seventh.”

That is what happens if God's daily work is measured according to a pocket calendar. What have the six days to do with me ? God needed a moment and an eternity for the creation of the world. For the world is always finished, and yet is created afresh every



moment. Every one who has time and inclination can see God at work creating the world ; he need only go out into the pasture, the forest, on the sea, in the rocky desert ; he need only look at the clouds, feel the gentle breeze or the raging storm. Or he may note the development of his child, the gradual decay of his father ; he may observe the changes which take place in himself, whether he is rising to the fullness of life or sinking towards death. All is creation that he sees. If, once, there was eternal spring, if the flower remained ever a flower, if the fruit never ripened, if the leaves never fell from the tree—if the spring so ardently sung by the poets, so greatly loved by all, were not to pass, then it would be time for men to despair, then the creation of the world would be over, and God would have put his work away, like a child discarding the toy in which he takes no further pleasure.

And if that were to happen, then the reign of chance would have come. And if chance ruled, things would be very different from what they are now. Our astronomical calendar would be useless, the sun might rise in the west or the north, and the stars would wander in space without a fixed plan, would run away, or collide and so destroy each other. On earth the seas would rise to the sky, and the vapours burn in flames. The blood in the veins of animals would stop flowing, or burst its vessels with fever, the human brain would cherish ideas in boundless



confusion, unheard of and horrible, such as no madman had ever dreamed of.

And all because the Lord had laid aside his work, and troubled himself no more about it.

I was once asked whether I did not sometimes feel a holy anger against God, in whose existence I believe, when he burdens me with sickness, men of evil intention, and other kinds of suffering? I see no reason for anger. Assuming that I am underserving of all the calamities, a thing which is very much to be doubted, I feel that my sufferings are a kind fatherly discipline; for that sort of suffering does not make a man worse; it inspires him, ennobles him, reconciles him to the shortness of life, to threatening death and is a wholesome counterbalance to the brutish demands of the bodily senses. I would not care to know how a man, who is able to enjoy all the pleasures of the earth undisturbed, feels when death calls and leaves his visiting card on him. There are those among us who would receive the card with comparative calmness; perhaps we might say at first: If you will be so good, call another time, I am very busy to-day; but in the end, if the visitor is not to be put off, we say: In God's name, let him come in; I, am ready.

Again, some one declares: He who believes in a God, belittles Him by so doing. For judging from the boundless sea of wrong and misery that fills His world, He would only be an unjust and careless God.



Thereupon, I ask myself : Why do we feel wrong and misery so deeply ? Because it is the exception. If it were the rule we should be accustomed to it. In my opinion there is incomparably more justice and happiness on the earth than the reverse ; a man that has an eye for these things will perceive them ; another who seeks only to prove the wrong and misery, will not observe the better side, the joy, the victory of good. So far as I can perceive, I notice that expiation follows sin. And where expiation is not accomplished outwardly a gloomy trial is held in the mind of the guilty. The unjust man, the oppressor, the cheat, may enjoy the whole host of so-called earthly joys, but such a man will never be contented or lighthearted. If his own conscience and that of his time have become so deadened that he hears no voice of accusation sounding through his own barren soul, at all events, he cannot find inward happiness, harmony or exaltation. He vegetates stupidly and dully, and if trials come, he is overwhelmed by despair. It is better for him who acquiesces, and prefers rather to suffer wrong than to do it—he has nothing to fear. He has built himself an ideal world, which is indestructible. This arrangement, which the bad man regards as a great misery, but in which the good man finds peace of mind, is the best proof of the existence of a wise God.

People are naturally never tired of asking : Why, if God is so wise, should He permit a wrong that



hurts, firstly, the one against whom it is practised ; and secondly, the one who commits it ? The objection is certainly striking. The God of Wisdom might refute it, but the narrow human intellect must here be silent. If the human intellect attempts an explanation by saying wrong must exist because this vale of tears is a place of purification, nothing is gained, for he will be met with : Why a vale of tears ? Why the necessity for purification ? A wise God-Creator would have prevented it in the very beginning.

I think as a man, and so it seems to me that a contrast—evil—is necessary to perfect happiness. As far as I and others know men, they can bear anything better than a series of prosperous days. Certainly, atheists will not be converted by such thoughts ; but that is of no account, for the Lord Himself will convert them when it is time, and when it is no longer necessary that atheists should exist. With such ideas we only make clear our personal standpoint which may be theoretically disputable, but is actually the safest refuge for resignation and contentment. One thing only : If unhappiness is necessary in order that its opposite, happiness, may appear the brighter, then the happy man should be doubly indulgent and kind to the unhappy man, for it is to him that he owes his own advantages.

We read that God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth made man in His own image. And we



learn, on the other hand, from universal history that man pictured his God in the image of man. By the latter method the idea of God loses essentially in dignity and holiness, for we are too familiar with the everyday ways of men. And again, through strained interpretations and intolerance, the orthodox Churches have brought the greatness of God into disrepute; another reason why the modern man knows but little of God, why he even crosses himself at the mention of the word "God," just as men did in the middle ages at the word "devil." Every other kind of designation has been brought forward : World-spirit, force, law of nature, infinity, and the like. It is pretty clear from this that people have a conception of the true, the incredible, incomprehensible, all-ruling. But it must not be called God, because that evokes a personality before their eyes, generally a handsome, dignified old man with white hair and beard, and modern reason cannot reconcile itself with such a representation of God.

Science speaks of a primitive cell as the first cause of all life. That is also a belief, with the sole difference that this belief is confined to a prison cell, whilst ours flies free through heaven. The primitive cell is the steward's corn-seed, from which a blade sprouts easily, but which cannot be produced without a seed. Long ago a fierce dispute arose as to which came first the hen or the egg. The hen, said one, or the egg could not have been laid ; the egg, asserted another,



or the hen could not have come out of it. Men stand on the same ground with their primitive cell. If I were a man of science, I might perhaps put it in this fashion: "The natural origin of all organic life is apparently a primitive cell. Behind it certainly stands divinity." The words would not be spoken "scientifically," but I venture to declare them in God's name, and indeed for the sake of science itself, which is thus brought into significant relationship with the other kingdoms and powers of the human mind.

And if the man of naïve perceptions represents to himself a good old man who forms the primitive cell, and creates Adam, where's the harm? And if this almighty, immortal old man tends the primitive cell in fatherly fashion, and watches it from development to development, until a being comes from it like unto its Creator—is that so foolish? Do not all living things in the world of nature aspire to perfection, so that in perfection they may resemble their Creator? Humanity is now about to create a new world through wonderful reforms. On what lines are human beings to work if not upon those of the Father who understood world-creation?

Many are irritated at the notion of believing in an actual God-Creator without ever having seen Him, without more intimate knowledge of His existence, without knowing something of the history of His life, and understanding something of His intentions. Such an idea is intolerable to the modern seeker



after knowledge, and therefore he prefers to throw God entirely overboard. But I ask such men, do they know much more of humanity, of themselves? Can they account for the origin of their own existence, whence they came, whither they go, what they signify? they are scarcely a lesser mystery to themselves than God is to them. Do they therefore declare that they do not exist?

God is from eternity to eternity. Now there are people who assert they cannot picture eternity to themselves. I believe them, but I can far less picture the contrary to myself. I can never imagine time or space to have a boundary. For what would be beyond the boundary of a certain time? Time again, and beyond that time, and so on always. And it would be the same with space; if it had a boundary, what could be beyond it but space again, and so on for ever. The attempt to represent the infinite to oneself might send a man mad, for it is absolutely incomprehensible. And yet no one will deny that the infinite exists. And if subtle philosophers have declared that there are no such things as time and space, that they are only a coinage of man's brain, they have stated so foolish a thing that no ordinary man can believe it. For how can there be a brain, if there is no space for it, how perception of an idea if there is no time for it! Many modern scholars prefer to utter such foolishness rather than acknowledge the existence of God.



I believe in God the Father, the Creator of the world as he appears symbolically represented in the book of Genesis and other ancient writings. But if such instruction had not been handed down to us, what then? Should I still believe it? According to my understanding I must answer, yes.

There was a boy who lived in a *châlet* of the Sölker Alps. His parents were woodcutters, and did not trouble themselves about him. He looked after their goats, lived with the animals, and heard nothing of God and the world. He felt the heat of the sun, and cold and hunger much as an animal does; at least he took it all indifferently and apparently thoughtlessly. Then came a very fertile summer; the warm spring rain had covered the meadows with verdure, and the summer sun had filled the herbs with sweet fragrance. The goats had never given such rich, delicious milk, as they did that summer. One morning the boy filled a flat earthenware vessel with milk, put it on the roof of the *châlet*, and let it stand there until it had evaporated. An observant neighbour asked the boy why he wasted milk in that way? The boy replied: "For the sun to drink. The sun is so warm and has made such good hay. The sun's a fine fellow. The sun shall have milk to drink."

So the simple youth offered a sacrifice to God, and yet he had scarcely heard that there was a God, and still less that He was perhaps the sun. And this was one of the nobler sacrifices not induced by fear, but made



solely out of gratitude. Savage nations, it is said, pray to their savage gods from fear of their power ; they pray to be spared. Men with acquired or inherited education pray to God out of love ; they have a heart's need to be grateful for the good they enjoy in God's world. Active gratitude fills them with happiness, and the more they yield themselves to the good and beautiful ideal of their divinity, the more they become like Him. Striving towards Him, coming nearer to Him, that is their aim. The fact is really this : man creates an ideal for himself which is a nobler image of himself ; he calls it God, and aspires to resemble it. Thus he climbs a rope ladder, the end of which he throws ever higher and higher up the rugged wall of rock, towards the heaven of perfection. Who taught him to do that ? He who put into his heart existence, strength, and the power of development, God the Father, who created the world for all eternity, and who will create it in all eternity.

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord.**

Once a stranger came travelling from a far north land. One day as he wandered in the mountainous country, he was greatly terrified by something he caught sight of. A man hanging on a wooden stake suddenly appeared before him. He was almost naked, his arms were outstretched and fastened to the wood with iron nails, and so were the feet. He



had a deep wound in the right side and was dead. The stranger hurried quickly past the horrible image which stood by the roadside. But he had not gone far when he came upon a second image similar to the first. Once more, this time on a bridge, another man hung, fastened to the Cross; and far below, where the village began, another, and yonder in the burying-place of the dead innumerable bodies hung on crosses, as though the most terrible oppressor had ravaged the neighbourhood. But the people went past them with indifference. Then the stranger asked a white-haired man what was the meaning of all these murdered men who were to be seen all over the neighbourhood hanging on crosses.

The old man replied: "Where do you come from, oh stranger, that you do not know the Cross? You must know that you will not only find the image in this district, but that it is erected in all the five quarters of the globe. It may be that the message has not reached the far north where a single night lasts for months. These are not different persons whose image hangs on the Cross, it is the portrait of One only—yes, truly, of the only One in heaven and on earth."

When the old man finished speaking, the stranger asked him to tell him something of this only One, for he could not understand it.

"My son, we can none of us understand it," said the old man. "There were mighty ones who an-



nounced in beguiling words that heaven had come upon earth, but in spite of this the nations would not accept their teaching. It was different with this One. Listen to me. Nearly 2,000 years ago there lived a poor Rabbi in the East. He wandered about the country and preached a new doctrine to His people. Other prophets had said : Defeat the enemy of your people, take their land, destroy their industry and labour, rule over the earth !—But the Rabbi said : ‘ We are all children of one Father, our kingdom is not of this world. Our earthly lot is renunciation and patience, only in the kingdom of immortality, at home with the Father, shall we be happy.’ Other prophets said : ‘ Love yourself and become strong ; hate your enemy, demand eye for eye, tooth for tooth !’ The Rabbi said : ‘ Love your enemy, do good to those who hate you.’ And when the poor wandering preacher had announced the strange doctrine of renunciation and love of one’s fellow men in many places, what happened ? What do you think happened ? ”

The stranger replied : “ They laughed at Him for a fool and turned away from Him.”

“ It did not happen like that,” said the old man. “ They declared His doctrine of gentleness and kindness to be dangerous to the state, condemned Him to death, and executed Him by crucifying Him as you see represented by the images.”

“ Yes,” exclaimed the stranger, “ but was it likely



that healthy, egoistic, sensible men would accept such a purely slavish and self-renouncing doctrine ? ”

“ They killed Him,” said the old man, “ they feared that such a doctrine would, if adopted, destroy and upset the kingdoms and the nations and households. Instead of that the Rabbi’s message has ennobled the family, educated the nations and made them more moral, and strengthened the kingdoms.”

“ Has the simple doctrine really been spread abroad ? ” asked the stranger from the far north.

“ It has spread from east to west, it has created a new civilization, and a new world-history. The simple teaching of the poor Nazarene who preached nothing but poverty and humility, has conquered brutal laws, it has become the ruling religion of the world. This revelation is the only one of its kind since the beginning of history. It is not a doctrine for slaves, for it makes a man master of himself ; and it is not a doctrine of self-annihilation, for it makes men immortal.”

The stranger stood long before one of the crosses and shook his head. This token which had given the deepest sense of atonement to eager human hearts was honoured more than anything in the world. How was that ?

Yes, stranger, how comes that ? It happens thus because men realized that the joy of sacrifice for others can be the greatest blessing for the individual as well as for all, that the sacrifice of death in the one redeems



a thousand lives, that humanity consists not of the egoism of the individual but of his unselfish love for others.

That is called a divine teaching. And why is this? Because it cannot be a human one. Hitherto men had lived for thousands of years and set forth all conceivable dogmas, and tried every possible means of raising the race. But they were too human, every one hated his neighbour and loved himself; every one blamed the faults of his neighbour and cherished his own; every one exhorted others to repent, but gave himself up to pleasure. Then came this only One and showed what love is, and how a man must willingly sacrifice himself for his fellow-men. There was nothing human about that, it was divinely great, and so this only One was called divine, the Son of God.

If we, as God's creatures, are likewise all sons of God—none of us stands so near Him, none of us is so like Him as Jesus. For His teaching is productive, world-preserving, ennobling, soul-purifying. It is extended far beyond earthly circumstances, it calls the dead to life, and makes them immortal.

Among the millions of God's children the Lord has none so like Him as the Son of the poor workman of Galilee. Therefore He is His only Son.

This only Son of God makes us happy, gives us eternal life, but desires one thing of us—that we believe in Him. We can become good and holy through



His teaching and example, but blessed only if we believe in Him. We need not recognize in Him the Son of God sent from Heaven to live according to His commandments and fulfil all the duties of Christianity. But that is not enough to become blessed. Only he who sees the Personal, Eternal, All-powerful God in Him, only he is blessed. In that belief he is blessed already. We actually experience the blessing through such a belief. I have often thought that the possessions we imagine are far more real than those which have actual existence. The latter can easily be destroyed at any moment by all sorts of accidents; the imaginary possessions live in our brains constant and indestructible in idea, in memory, in expectation, until the brain itself gives way. Therefore I do not despise the ideal ! It has a material worth in its way, it is a possession and an experience. And when Jesus said to us : I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoso believeth in Me, he shall be blessed !—and we believe in Him, then we are happy indeed in the expectation of eternal happiness. No money and no property, no honour and no pleasure can make us so absolutely joyful and happy, as belief in Jesus Christ.

In the Styrian highlands there lived a peasant who was nicknamed "The Pair." He gained the name through his curious conduct. He was a well-to-do landowner, had a family, a large number of servants, numerous friends, and yet he was scarcely



ever seen in society. He always went about alone, and yet not alone. When he walked along the road, he always took the worst, the rough or wet path, so that the good path on his right remained free, as if for a companion, whom he wished to honour. And yet no one was ever seen walking by his side. If he entered an inn, he always called for a glass of wine for himself and a second glass for another who was not visible. The second had to be put on a metal tray or on a white plate, as is the custom of the country for specially honoured guests. When the peasant had drunk his own wine, he used to pay for both glasses, and to say that if a thirsty man appeared, he might drink the glass of wine left on the tray. At home, at every meal, a special cover was laid in the place of honour; it consisted of white china, and silver which had always to be bright and clean. The large table was well-filled, the father sat at the top, but the place on his right hand remained empty. And yet the peasant leaned respectfully to that side as if a distinguished guest sat there. After dinner the food set before the invisible guest was given to the poor.

It was on account of this companionship with an invisible being that the peasant was called "The Pair." If he was asked what it meant, he either made no reply or said mysteriously: But He is there. It was well known whom he meant—the Lord Jesus. The man took the bad path out of love and honour to Him, out of love and honour to Him a place



was set at the table, and whether he was at work or taking his rest, he was always calm and cheerful, and behaved as if he were in the company of another, a person of distinction, whom no one ever saw. Before he had attained a great age, the man fell mortally sick. Then a chair was placed by his bedside, and he put out his arm as if he were holding some one's hand and carried on a low-toned conversation with the invisible occupant of the chair. When he was dead, no one ventured to move the chair from the bedside. His grave in the churchyard was near a white marble monument representing the Good Shepherd. And as the peasant's coffin sank into the earth it seemed to me as I stood there that a white light gleamed into the open grave from the figure of the Good Shepherd, shining brilliantly in the sun.

And this peasant was one of those who are happy upon earth in the belief of Jesus Christ.

In the course of time numberless prophets and teachers have arisen against Christianity. They all flattered human nature, and yet none of their doctrines have been victorious. Christianity brought a new suffering on the earth—suffering with others, compassion, pity. It healed thousands of sorrows by means of the new suffering; it conquered by means of the new suffering—yes, conquered, for our civilization is Christian. Of course there are men who are indifferent, faithless and wicked; there are heathenish customs and great and powerful currents



of materialism, there is injustice and malice, often most terrible. And yet the spirit of Christianity prevails; it prevails in law, and in purpose, and in temperament. Many who strive against it are caught by it. Even if many deny the love of God, love of one's neighbour remains as a principle, and is regarded as the highest moral law. And to forgive one's enemy is considered great and heroic. Love for one's enemy is seldom practised because it is so difficult, so super-human.

Some years ago there arose in Germany a modern, fiery spirit who declared that what had hitherto been called virtue—modesty, voluntary poverty, humility, love of one's neighbour—was nothing but weakness, degeneration, a mistake, in the end actually sin, because it lowered the human race, and raised misery as a model. The only true virtue was pure egoism, the virtue of the strong man. The strong were to annihilate the weak, so that the weak might be rooted out. The ruling mind must bring the slavish souls under the yoke, so that vulgar banality might not be victorious. Only the strong, inconsiderate and brutal man deserves to be master, he is the super-man, the godlike man! This doctrine of an intellectual master was written in dazzlingly beautiful language, and it might be thought that, considering the inclination of our younger generation to barbarism, mere physical strength and war, such principles would act as sparks in a powder-cask. The new



prophet was, it is true, talked and written about with deep interest, but a community of supermen has not been formed on these lines. Indeed it would not be possible, for the doctrine ignored one simple matter, for if the stronger is always to annihilate the weaker, and at last only two strong men are left, the stronger of the two would kill the other. Christianity is too firmly rooted in the nations for them quietly to accept such a "revelation." And so the doctrine became the plaything of idle minds who would have liked to follow it but could not.

A Russian prophet has recently declared the opposite of the above-mentioned Herculean religion. He declares that it is not the physically strong, powerful, selfish man who is strong, but the submissive, unresisting, resigned, patient and humble man. An enemy is not conquered by fighting with him, for he gathers himself together and prepares to be more and even more hostile, and makes fresh attacks upon his self-defending adversary, until he ruins him, provided he be not brought to ruin himself. But he who does not strive against his enemy, deprives him of the power to attack; he will have to endure and suffer much, yet he will be in no danger of being annihilated in battle, he will have disarmed the enemy, and will gradually make a friend of him—in short, he will conquer in his way. We may, in fact, observe everywhere in life that the patient, modest man must indeed live in poor and narrow



circumstances, but he has no irreconcilable enemy, and goes through life fairly, unopposed and respectably. The last doctrine, in spite of its apparent weaknesses, is a strengthening one for the nations, and furthers civilization, while the first tends to weaken the nations and hinders civilization.

It is remarkable that those two doctrines—that of the superman and that of the humble slave—should have been brought forward at the same time, and should be so exactly opposed to each other. The last was naturally the best understood, for it is the original Christianity.

It might be said that the doctrine of the superman was aristocratic, while that of Christianity was democratic. Yet on closer inspection we find that the first merely benefits aristocracy theoretically, whereas Christianity is practically a powerful support to aristocracy. For a doctrine which preaches slavery and renunciation to the people makes it easy for the strong and selfish to keep them in slavery, to accumulate property, and to become the masters of the world. That seems to be the dark side of Christianity, in that sense it has been used in a very un-Christianlike manner, and I have often said to myself that Charlemagne, who converted nations to Christianity by fire and sword, was less than a Christian. So likewise is the Russian Czar of to-day, when he imposes restraints in matters of religious belief; and our administrators of the law are not Christians when



they say : For the preservation of social order, religion must be maintained among the people. No ! a thousand times, No ! There must be religion, but not on account of social order, not for the advantage of an individual or of a class or of a state, solely because it is a need of the heart, and for the sake of God. What did the priest think who unctuously explained to me that religion in the masses was essential to the public safety ? If the priest himself be an atheist—and in this case the man was—then all is at an end ! It does not infrequently happen that priests are unbelievers, and the cause may partly be that they conceive religious matters too mechanically, and thus lose the spirit, and that they have been obliged to study and consider dogma too much, so that the spontaneity of the belief of the heart is injured. Meanwhile I always console myself with the belief that we have more priests than Pharisees.

With regard to the spread of Christianity, of which we were just speaking, it owes its growth, not so much to violence, but rather to the virtues of peace, gentleness, sacrifice, and joy in knowledge in the sense of the Apostles. And the fact that men have not shaken off Christianity, although it has often brought them oppression and poverty, proves how deeply the teaching has sunk into their hearts, and what a rich substitute for the lack of material prosperity they find in the Christian inwardness of life, in their minds and souls.



The kernel of the Christian doctrine is the Sermon on the Mount. It has been often and variously explained. I have never specially troubled myself with the different interpretations, but have taken the Gospel and made out the meaning for myself. My conception is quite simple. — Blessed are the poor in spirit. I do not understand that to mean that unintellectual persons are blessed — no, it is the poor who have nothing except their ideals and beliefs, their spiritual life, for they carry heaven within themselves. The meek are blessed, for they will possess the land, they will have the enjoyment of the beauty of the land, while care and trouble is the lot of those who call themselves masters of it. The sad are blessed because they cannot be disappointed, every feeble ray of light is a joy and consolation to them, while the happy run the risk every moment, of becoming sad or, accustomed as they are to joy, of falling into the misery of despair. Those who long for justice are blessed, for they find a divine bond of comradeship, they recognize the hand of God when they see the victory of the good, the destruction of the wicked. The merciful are blessed, for in sympathy with others they find their better selves, become aware of the mutual dependence of human beings, do not feel themselves alone, but on common ground with all. Blessed are they who keep their hearts pure from earthly desires; the image of God which they carry in their hearts will not be dimmed. The peace-loving are blessed, for neither hate nor guilt dwells in



their heart, they are innocent and glad as the children whom God rocks upon His bosom. Those who innocently suffer persecution for their ideals are blessed, for it is happiness to suffer for what we love, and the object of our love becomes dearer the more efforts the enemy makes to snatch it away. Christ says of all such, not that they will be blessed, but that they are blessed. The penitent who openly confesses his sins shall be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, since he frankly utters his convictions. Then again : If you pray in an inner chamber out of humility, but are not ashamed to do so before the people, so that it is all the same where you pray, you may commune with your God always and everywhere, when and where your heart bids you. I am not come, so He says, to change the old laws but to fulfil them, not, however, according to the dead letter but to the living spirit. Learned writers and Pharisees fulfil them according to the letter, but if you do like these, you will never be just and never attain to Heaven. Learned writers say, You shall not kill ; I say, You shall not even be angry. He who is angry and condemns to death will himself be condemned to death. Your sacrifices on the altar will avail you nothing if you are at enmity with your neighbour. The ancients said, You shall not commit adultery. I say ; You shall not even think of breaking your marriage vows. Rather should you become blind than let your eye desire your neighbour's wife ; better lose your sight



than your honour. Rather cut off your hand than reach at your neighbour's goods ; better your hand should wither than your soul. It is said by the ancients, You shall not bear false witness ; I say, You shall not swear by God at all ; yes or no, that is enough. It is said by the ancients, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth ; I say, You shall not resist evil, but suffer everything patiently. The ancients bid you hate your enemy ; I say, Love your enemy, do good to those who hate you. Thus our Father in Heaven acts towards the man who is hostile to him so that he may become like Him. It is easy to love those who love you, we need no law for that, even the ungodly do it. If you will follow Me, endeavour to become perfect.

That is how I read the word of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. There is nothing like it in force and nobleness.

And it continues :

If you do good, do it not on account of the people, because you will then have no joy in your deed. The people can bring to nought the best you do by their disapproval. Let not your left hand know what the right doeth, so secret should you keep good work. Your Father in Heaven sees it and will bless it ; that is, He will make you strong and ever stronger, so that you may be able to accomplish the greatest and best. Do not use many words when you pray. Submit to the will of Him who is in Heaven, honour



His name, seek His kingdom. Implore forgiveness of your sins, promise that you will also pardon those who sin against you. Pray for strength of heart against the temptations of the world, and for the salvation of the wicked. So shall you pray. If you repent a sin, do not do so with a sanctimonious countenance, dress yourself in your best, be cheerful so that people may not see that you are a penitent. Be not too anxious about your means of support; such care spoils the simple pleasures of life for most men, and when they have painfully acquired what they need for supporting their life, lo ! death is there. Gather not treasures on earth for they pass away; rather gather treasures for your spiritual perfection. Lay them before your Heavenly Father as an inheritance for your posterity. Where your treasure is, your heart is, and it must not cleave to earth, it must be with your Heavenly Father. If you are of the earth, you cannot be of heaven, for no man can serve two masters. Work for the day, ask for your daily bread, set your mind gladly and cheerfully on the kingdom of God, and on peace of heart. The word of God is your only light, all the light of the world is darkness. Judge not others, so that you may not be judged, for as you do, so it will be done unto you. Improve yourself first, then desire improvement in your neighbour. Do not give your best to the wicked, keep your holiest for yourself. Strive in order to attain, pray to God, and he will grant your prayer. If your



son asks you for bread, you would not give him a stone; then surely will your Heavenly Father grant the request you make to Him. What you would have people do unto you, that do unto them; therein is the kernel of the law. The path to perfection is narrow and difficult, few take it. Beware of false teachers who come to you with flattering words, in order to betray your soul; judge them not according to their words, but according to their deeds. If their deeds are bad, then they are bad men. God does not give Heaven to those who flatter Him in words, but to those who do His will. That is My teaching. If you follow it, you will build your house on a firm foundation, storms and floods cannot destroy it.

These words almost strike awe into our hearts, for scarcely one of all those who call themselves Christians live entirely according to that teaching. Even more, very few of the professional teachers spread it. A little while ago a clerical newspaper in my native land, the organ of the nobility and big landowners, sought to refute the fact that Christianity is the religion of the poor and oppressed. It is a religion for all, for rich and poor, for master and servant. The paper brought forward as a proof all sorts of statements made by theologians and Roman Catholic writers, but not a single statement made by Christ Himself. That is significant. Christianity then is a religion for all, but it demands that neither rich men nor ruling men shall be included in that



all, if they enjoy their wealth and power at the cost of the poor. Christ preaches a ruling authority, but not oppression, He recognizes those who hold property if at the same time they give to others, and He cries, sadly, Sooner shall a camel go through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter Heaven ! . On the contrary He invites the poor and weary to come to Him ; comforts the persecuted and overburdened ; honours the meek and lowly, and is never tired of saying that man] should [despise earthly treasures, and gather unto himself heavenly ones ; that he should be gentle, and if any one smites him on the right cheek, he should offer the left. "Who loves Me, must leave everything that he possesses, take up his Cross, and follow after Me." I ask, Is that a religion to appeal to the rich and powerful ?

The social democrats are unwise when they turn aside from Christianity. There is no teaching and no law better suited than Christianity to genuine workmen and the oppressed ; it has already broken the yoke of slaves. But if the social democrats are not satisfied that it will set them free and place them in a position worthy of their best endeavours ; if they wish to rule and oppress others, their Christianity is as little use to them as it is to tyrants. Christianity recognizes no master in the sense of the inconsiderate wielder of violence. It calls even God the Lord Father. And all men are brothers.

Even the primitive religions of the East preached



fraternity and renunciation ; the Spirit of God was certainly in them, although they did little to enlighten earthly days. They knew not immortal life, and therefore to renounce the worth of the temporal was too heavy a demand. The truth concerning heart and will came to us a thousandfold enriched through the poor wandering Rabbi of Galilee. Through Him the word became flesh, in Him the teaching was transformed into flesh and blood ; He lived it, He showed how it ought to be lived, and that it would become our salvation. Our Saviour is Jesus.

**Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary.**

I had a friend in my youth who was a Roman Catholic theologian. I again and again disputed with him at a time when my friend was already installed as priest, and I—according to the reports of clerical newspapers—was a confirmed heretic. We disputed concerning the dogma of Mary's Virginity. The priest ought by rights to have broken off the dispute with me long before. He often confessed to me, with perspiration on his brow, that he would not have ventured to speak on this subject with an opponent, he was only supposed to preach the dogma from the pulpit when no one could make any objections, but to argue with an anti-Christian was not permitted to him. Yet, because he perceived a drop of religious



blood in me, even if it was only inherited from my forefathers, he hoped by degrees to convert me. So long as he spoke he had no success. When he was silent, when I saw this quiet pale man lying on his death-bed, a crucifix in his hand, a picture of the Annunciation on the wall over his head, I was as good as converted.

A maiden kneels on a stool saying her evening prayer. She has taken off her upper garment, she folds her hands meekly, full of fervour, she prays ardently for the Redeemer whom her people have been expecting in vain for thousands of years. Suddenly, a youth stands before her, a blossoming lily in his hand. He approaches the maiden, greets her, and gives her the message that she will bear a son. She replies with calmness that it cannot be as she has no husband. The youth tells her that the Holy Ghost will beget the son, who is therefore the Son of God. That is what I read in the picture. And beneath it lay the dead man who had been such an eloquent defender of this article of faith. At one time I often beat my hands together, and cried almost angrily: Why that? It is not necessary. It was not in the old Christianity, it is not in the Christianity of many countries to-day, and the belief in the Son of God was there, and still exists. Why, for the sake of an arbitrary interpretation of old revelations, bring in a dogma that flies in the face of reason, that challenges the understanding and criticism, which makes belief



so difficult, if not impossible for thinking men? It adds nothing to an explanation of the Divine Man, it only confuses; it arouses no enthusiasm, no fervour, because it is against nature; it does not further piety, nor morals, it leads rather to many doubtful ideas, and what is worst in our time, it challenges the mockery of the world. And what is the use of that?

The good priest Urban refuted these propositions excellently in his way, by reference to the sacred and ecclesiastical writings. He brought forward everything, except proof, and when he observed this fact, he said there was no proof, men must believe in it. That defeated me, there is much to say against faulty proofs, nothing against faith. "If," I remarked once, "you would not attempt to prove such things, you would be incontestable."

Now I was standing beside his coffin and that was the most incontestable fact of all. I repented having so often excited and vexed this pious faithful soul, and I considered that if I had faith in ninety-nine parts of religion, why not in the whole hundred? Everything is mystical, and everything is clear. If it is described figuratively, must it be taken literally? And if it is meant literally, may I not interpret it figuratively? The maiden had an eager longing for the Redeemer, and was filled with an ardent yearning for God, she had but one prayer, one desire, one happiness, that the Saviour might at length be born to her people. And when the divine message came that she, the humble



maiden of the Lord, was the chosen one, her prayer rose to the loftiest and most exalted enthusiasm. And, behold, through that holy spirit did she conceive. Inspired by that spirit, the longing for the Messiah, she conceived without sensuality or desire, and she remained in her innocence, in her virginity. Purity is lost only through the "sin" of sensual lust; who has not that sin remains pure. And in that way did Mary conceive by the Holy Ghost, and bear a child as a virgin.

I wished to be a priest. I do not know how it would have fared with me in propounding such an interpretation of the dogma. And yet I was a believer. Purity of heart does not depend on physical circumstances but on disposition. I should therefore preach with profound and sacred testimony that Mary conceived without sin, and bore a child as a pure maiden—and as I understand this, all the world might well agree without need of touching ecclesiastical dogma. I can interpret other things in the right way which taken literally, are nonsense. What is the purpose of man's individual soul but this? Only people ought not to dispute the existence of this soul.

How great and significant is the Incarnation and its message! The Saviour first saw the light in a stable. The rich thrust him out, the poor sought him, scholars misunderstood him, princes contended one with another on his account after his life was over. The wise discovered him.



The presence of God appeared in human form ! Had they seen in Him the Saviour at once, His appearance would have been superfluous. Whom could He have redeemed if all had been redeemed already? The work of redemption commenced with His childhood—a childhood passed in poverty, begun in the lowliest stable. There is no mysticism in this. It is an easily understood message for all time, for all people.

**Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead.**

How does Pilate, the heathen, come into the Creed ? For others who are of great importance in the life of Jesus are not there. How comes it that Pilate is honoured with an eternal memorial in the sacred confession of belief of the Christian faith ? How is it that he comes into it ? Because, in contrast, he is the original portrait of the erring, egoistic man, because he did the most decisive thing that men could do to make the Prophet *divine*—he caused him to suffer. He condemned the most righteous of men to death.

If Christ had not suffered !

Let us suppose that the Roman Governor Pilate had heard of his teaching, had been present at the Sermon on the Mount, had been pleased by it, and had written the following to Tiberius : Caesar ! There has arisen in the province of Palestine a man who seems to me fitted to tame the restless Jewish nation. True, he is himself a born Jew, but he preaches a new doctrine which can be turned to our advantage. He preaches



weakness and humility to the people, leads them away from striving after or demanding things concerned with the state or with worldly life, from desire and pleasure, while he directs their mind to a life beyond (in the "Kingdom of God"). He preaches poverty and submission, and, nevertheless, the people rush to him and are inspired by his teaching, for his personality is indescribably attractive. He is named Jesus, the Christ. I might give him an influential post, so that he might spread his principles further, and bring the people back to the submission which we desire. To emphasize what I have said, I enclose some of his utterances, so that you, great Caesar, etc.

So wrote Pilate to the Emperor. And he to Pilate : Governor of the Province ! We have received your information about the people's new prophet with satisfaction. If his teaching is really calculated to weaken the patriotic dissatisfaction of nations, leaders, and scholars, to keep the multitude in check by principles of submissive brotherhood, he shall not remain in Jerusalem. Send him to us, we will make him high priest of the whole Roman Empire, and he shall have his palace in Rome. His doctrine of poverty and submission shall be imparted to all the nations of the earth, so that they may be easily led, and our statesmanship shall be honoured. The times are unfavourable, we need new prophets. Your affectionate Tiberius.

And then Christ would have sailed for Rome with a large retinue in a stately ship, would have been



welcomed by Caesar with all homage, adorned with gold and led to a princely palace, where he would have begun to exercise his priestly office in dignity and splendour. The nations bow before such magnificence, in which they imagine a reflection of divinity; they patiently submit to the misery and slavery, while the high priest, always preaching humility and renunciation, lives in luxury and power, until at last, very aged, he sleeps the quiet sleep of death on silken pillows.

I ask, Is such a Christ conceivable? No, never. He owes His divinity to the fact that He lived His teaching. That He lived it Himself and was ready to sacrifice Himself and to die for it. Pilate was the instrument of His divine sufferings and death, and therefore he comes into the Creed.

On the whole what happened to Christ is what happens to all the best men. He was misunderstood in part, wilfully misjudged in part, despised, accused, persecuted, until wounded to the uttermost, and finally killed. It seems as if it must be so, in order that the true victory may be attained; for out of suffering and death the soul springs forth anew and immortal. In one thing Christ differs from other companions of His fate, He did not defend Himself, He was silent. He allowed His deeds to speak for Him. And they spoke in eternity. Not so much His miracles. Every one who loves the people works miracles. Much more did the great sacrifice of His death seal the truth



and faith of His teaching for all time. He preached sacrifice of self for the sake of one's fellow-men, He showed how this was to be accomplished. He might have saved His life by disavowing His teaching, but as He knew that that teaching would make men happier and better, He did not disavow it, He preferred to die. And His death has become an eternal living example for us.

A long time ago I was politely asked by a young journalist for my opinion concerning the sacrifice of the mass. I looked at my young questioner nonplussed, and my answer took the form of a question : " Why do you want to know ? "

" I should like to write an article about it for our paper," said the youth.

" What I think about the sacrifice of the mass is to form an article for your financial journal. Is that what you mean ? "

" We have heard that you are a good Catholic, and it would have interested our readers."

" The sacrifice of the mass in the next column to the list of prices, at a penny a line, I suppose ? "

That irritated the young lion. First, he asked if it was true that the priests sold a mass for sixpence ; then when he already stood at the door, which I had gladly opened for him, he said : " I would just ask one thing of you, wholly for myself. Some say that the sacrifice of the mass is only a commemoration ; others maintain, on the contrary, that



every mass is a real sacrifice of the Cross, at which the history of the Passion is actually renewed. Tell me, what is your opinion ? ”

“ Take care not to stumble,” I said, pointing to the door.

“ If the latter is the case,” he continued, “ it would be horrible to permit a mass to be read, to arrange the sacrifice, and to assist at it in cold blood.”

But he was already outside. I had strong arms at that time.

This story is not invented. I would have entered into conversation on the subject with a serious-minded man who, let us say, did not write articles for a financial paper, and should possibly have expressed my opinion thus : The sacraments are valueless for the sceptic, but extremely precious for the believer. Years ago in my book, *Allerlei Menschliches*, I spoke among other things of mysticism. I asked why the modern man had such a horror of mysticism, since every one of us is wrapped in mystery ? The world is a riddle to us, so are the past and the future ; the causes of our desires and their ultimate results are mysteries to us. And man is the greatest enigma of all. Everything around us, before us, behind us, over us, under us, is mysterious. Glaring lights which flame up occasionally, blind us more than they light us. If we turn the mystery into a symbol in order to bring it emblematically nearer our heart, to humanize it, explain it, that is the best thing we can do.



We do not worship the bread and wine in the Sacrament, but the mystery in the lap of which our eternal fate rests. We remember the divine Love which redeemed us, and are happy in the thought. He who does not at once understand me in this, need not trouble to understand me. Let him quietly leave my opinions alone and stick to his own. I desire but one thing of him, that he shall respect my individuality as I respect his. I only show the door to him who with impertinent mockery violates the sanctuary of millions of his fellow-men.

I have never seen a pagan or an atheist enter a Christian church with head covered, but I have seen many who did not bow the head at the most sacred moment of the sacrifice of the mass, at the transubstantiation. Why the one and not the other? If I cannot believe in the mystery myself, I ought at least to respect it as a thing in which there dwells immeasurable sanctity for others. When I stand in a dimly-lighted corner of the church, and look at the altar where the candles solemnly burn, when the incense rises slowly like a cloud of devotion, where the priest murmurs silent prayers, and where the bell often calls a sounding *sursum corda*, I am forced to remember the drama on Golgotha, where we were taught how to sacrifice ourselves for humanity.

This sacrifice is, however, expected by everybody to-day. The father devotes his life to his family, the friend pledges himself for his friend, the patriot



makes vast sacrifices for his country, the very heart of the world is laid down willingly for the general good. Such sacrifices are of great value, they are esteemed the highest expression of lofty humanity, and heroes are honoured as immortal. Why, then, belittle a ceremony which ever brings afresh before our eyes in holy mystery the joy of sacrifice and a hero's death?

The heathens recognized the heroism of sacrifice in war, but Christianity does not always agree with such sacrifice. On the contrary, it demands daily of each human being a meek humility, a patient fulfilment of duties, a loving joy in both great and small acts for the good of our neighbours. And He who is stretched on the Cross represents all this to us.

! Students, wrapped in narrow prejudices, endeavour to discover if it was a fact that at the death of Jesus the earth trembled and the sun was hidden. Why do they need to know? Did not the hearts of the disciples tremble, were not their souls clouded, when He died? And if man trembled, the universe would tremble too, and if he was sunk in gloom, the light of all the stars in Heaven must seem to be extinguished. And so the miracle in which he believes is performed. If the miracle is not performed for others, still it is for him, and in all truth and essence, for he feels it in his innermost soul. It is a childish proceeding to wish to correct belief by science. Those who know men do not attempt it, only



the mechanical scholar endeavours to do so, the unintelligent individual, who can conceive of nothing beyond the outward crust of clay in which he himself is enveloped.

If all Christ's miracles could be proved to be materially true—that is, if scientific proof of their performance could be brought forward—then the Saviour would have been drawn down to the level of merely human history. He would have worked the “miracles,” but any other person might have worked them under similar natural conditions, and we should not have had a Saviour. He who prefers Christ as a man might be content with this ; but he who feels within himself a predisposition to believe in a divine Redeemer, he has the right to adhere to his faith and he may be called happy.

**He descended into hell ; The third day He rose again  
from the dead.**

This was the only article of the Creed in which I could not actually believe in my childhood. The resurrection from the dead was self-evident, Our Lord God could not be dead. But the descent into hell ! Our Lord God's place was in Heaven, and not in hell, and I could not believe that the beloved Lord Jesus went down into hell. Our old servant Mark gave me the following explanation of the fifth article of the Creed : “ Jesus did not descend into hell like



Herod or Judas Iscariot, He went there of His own free will in order to see the home of the devil for Himself. He saw the skin of the extortioner and of the cheat pulled off as fast as it grew. The hair of the evildoer was singed and the soles of his feet were tickled. The cozeners who cheated me about a watch had splinters of wood driven under his finger-nails. Hans, the glutton, who ate all the meat himself and set the bones before the guests was roasted in pig's fat until soaked in it. Chattering Kate had her tongue nailed to the tip of her nose. Ah, you laugh, boy, but it's not a joke ! The reason why the Lord descended into hell, was in order that He might lessen the suffering. Then He came up again at once."

Thus Mark, our old servant, interpreted the story, and I believed what he said for a long time. Later when I went to school the catechist upset my ideas again. He taught me that Christ, after dying on the Cross, did not descend into the actual hell, but only into the entrance to hell, where the Jewish elders awaited their Messiah. King David was there playing sad psalms on the harp, and the wise King Solomon, who had sung his great song for a thousand years, and was falling asleep over it, and there sat Joseph, the Egyptian, wrapped in the cloak which Potiphar had desired to tear from his body. Aged Abraham crouched there shaking his head and incessantly talking of the stars in the heavens, whilst he tried to count the sands of the



sea, like unto which his posterity was numbered. There crouched old Noah too, who loved to sip wine, but in the garden, deprived of sunlight, the grapes never sweetened. In the farthest corner, in a cleft of the rocks sat Adam and Eve, who held one another in a close embrace and wept. . . But this is childish. The catechist did not represent it in this manner. He only said in a few words that Christ released His forefathers from darkness, and led them to eternal blessedness. That he thus became the Saviour of the Jews as well as of the Christians, and if the Jews refused to recognize Him as their Messiah, in spite of the fact that He was of their race, they might look around them and endeavour to discover a better Saviour elsewhere.

The Lord, having returned from the forecourt of hell, again entered His body which the disciples had taken down from the Cross and buried. And then something unique, something extraordinarily great happened. The man who had been crucified, and then buried under heavy stones, was seen alive during the days that immediately followed. Two women saw Him walking in the garden, two of His disciples met Him on the road, and when more of the disciples were gathered together in order to discuss the Master's death in deepest grief, He appeared suddenly among them as He had so often been with them before they looked at the death wounds in His beautiful, living body.



Here too, as in every case where something sublime may be destroyed, the profane world has used its probe in order to dissect faith. People were not large-hearted enough to support a great ideal as might upon occasion be expected of them. If the teaching and deeds of Christ have remained alive until the present day, and have spread throughout the world, and are an active influence with nations as with individuals, we may be quite sure that He is a living force. If His arm raises up the suffering, guides the erring, rules kings, then He lives. And if we know that He died and was laid among the dead, we see by the unfathomable greatness of His power that He must have risen from the dead. We admit that Homer, Dante, Galileo, Columbus, Gutenberg, Goethe, are immortal, why should it not be the same with Jesus the Christ? That would be an interpretation suitable for the world, but the world will not accept it. People occasionally assert the immortality of Napoleon, but an assertion as to the immortality of Christ does not pass their lips. And yet the believer steps up to them and declares: His body also has risen from the dead!

I have studied a little natural history, and am aware that, according to the laws of nature known to us, it is not possible for a dead human body to become alive again. And yet I believe in the Resurrection of Christ as a man. Why? Because I like to believe it, because the idea does me good, because



it comforts and helps me, because it makes me happy. You may be right with your natural history, but my thought, my idea, my belief is also nature, and if my Saviour rose from the dead according to my view of nature, it is no business of yours, and you cannot prevent it or make me believe that it did not happen !

Indeed I have met Him. I have met Him in the garden when the flowers sprouted up from the ground. I have met Him in the street when a hungry man lay there whom I could feed, when a stranger wandered there whom I could shelter. And at home sitting with my wife and children, in serious conversation about the aims of men, or enjoying lighter and more cheerful talk, suddenly He was with us. I see Him at every hour of the day and night as often as I think of Him. He stands before me, tall, in His dark blue garment, unadorned, bare-headed, a thin face with its youthful beard, the silent eloquent mouth, the dark hair smoothly pushed back, and His large blue eyes full of gentle seriousness. I know no one better than I know Him. I stand in awe of Him, and yet He is to me like a beloved brother, from whom I have no secrets, to whom I go for advice and assistance when I do not know how to help myself. I generally see Him standing there simply as a man ; but when I lay seriously ill, He appeared to me in a shining brightness with the Stigmata and the Cross. I use the expression, He appeared to me, although it was



my imagination that brought Him before me, because I longed to see Him. But if the allurements of the world with their pleasures and flattery take hold of me, if I carelessly hurry down the steep path, then I suddenly see Him standing in the background under a palm-tree, His mien full of warning.

And when I lie sleepless in the long nights, the ticking of the clock and the beating of my heart the only audible sounds—my children, big and little, at rest in the adjoining rooms—I cannot be sure that one of them may not scream or groan at any minute stricken by a sudden attack of mortal illness. Yet they slumber peacefully and know nothing of my fears. Beneath the heavy press of life with all its power of illusion, desire, suffering and misery, they slumber sweetly, heedless of the dark future. Then I hear His words : Let Me bear the burden, poor human father, I am stronger than you !

And if on account of these fears for my children I myself go astray. . . There have been hours, nay even days, when I did not see Him.

When I left my hard-worked mother, and went out into the wide world, was He with me then ? When I seemed about to sink into all kinds of dissoluteness with some boon companions, was He with me then ? When I began to turn my thoughts to fame and the attractions of wealth, was He with me then ? When I began to take pleasure in luxury and enjoyment, was He with me then ? and is He with me now



when I am almost boasting of being so well acquainted with Him? On such matters we should be meekly silent.

I will here insert a letter that came to me from Jerusalem about a year ago, which emphasized the fact that the grace of Heaven must first descend upon us before we can hope to be on the same terms of friendship with the Saviour as with an earthly companion.

“Dear old fellow,—

“Last year when we celebrated the Resurrection Mass together on Easter Saturday in our favourite Church of the Consolation of the Virgin, I never thought that to-day I should be at the real and actual place of the Passion and the Resurrection. But I must tell you at once I was nearer the Saviour at home in our little church than I am here. In fact I was repenting that I had visited the Holy Land, when to-day I experienced a moment that made up a hundred times for all disappointments.

“I promised to spare you the description of the journey, as it can be found anywhere, and I shall also omit the description of my feelings at the entry into Jerusalem, and for the reason that it is not worth describing. From the hour we got into the train at Jaffa, I felt strange and queer. When we went from the station at Jerusalem up into the town, an international crowd of pilgrims and mules, and hotels



as modern and vulgar as any on the Riviera, greeted us; I was quite irritated. And when one wandered up and down the narrow, noisy alleys of the old Hebrew town, and sought in vain in Jerusalem for a Calvary such as is seen in all the larger towns in Styria, I was as wretched as if I had lost something very dear. The Mount of Calvary is not a rocky height such as we represent it, and the place of the Crucifixion, which in the time of Christ was outside the town, is now covered with a crowd of buildings, churches and chapels, so that no imagination is strong enough to conjure up the actual historical associations of the neighbourhood. The hole in which the Cross stood is shown on a block of stone in the middle of a gloomy building. When I visited the place for the first time, it was littered with newspapers and orange peel; in the absence of the caretaker some hungry and thirsty Italian or Englishman had had his lunch there. In the evening of Easter Saturday, at the time when the Resurrection Mass is held in our country, I went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The crowd and the heat and the fumes of thousands of candles and the noise (it was probably intended for singing) were so disagreeable that it was impossible for me to feel in a devotional mood. I visited the Holy Place again in the night, still without success. Dervishes were quarrelling over a few candles, I believe; a white-haired Abbé knelt there and wrung his hands convulsively, and twisted



himself about as if in despair. Perhaps he felt much as I did. If we had been able to weep over such want of grace, grace would have already been granted. But it was all so barren, so empty ! I seemed so completely lost, so far from God. And I had come for this ? This was the fulfilment of the holiest wish of my life ? Afterwards I thought I would go down to the Valley of Kedron, but a Turkish sentinel at the gate drove me back into the town. So I sought the monastery where I had taken up my quarters, and on my couch, I said to myself : You are in Jerusalem ! You are in the city of David, a stone's throw from the place where stood Solomon's Temple. You are in Jerusalem, the scene of the pious dreams of your youth, of which you were never tired of reading and hearing. Jerusalem, for the sake of whose divine mysteries you renounced the world and chose the altar ! I said all this over to myself, but in my heart I felt nothing but grief and despair because I was not in tune with my surroundings.

“ I did not neglect to see the rising of the morning star, but the town was awake in the early dawn. I hastened to get out of the city by the Stephen Gate, thirsting for solitude as a hart thirsts for the water-brook. On the steep road I met porters and pack-horses. The bridge over Kedron was in the possession of half a dozen beggars, among them some, half naked, exposing signs of leprosy. One of the beggars thrummed a fiddle, and held his mouth wide open to receive



coins. This queer purse was certainly a safe one, especially as the man appeared to have sharp teeth. The other wretches fought amongst themselves for the alms they snatched at, but they left the Fiddler alone ! The chapel containing the Virgin's grave, half built in the rocks, was closed. I walked between the olive trees to the Garden of Gethsemane, but here, too, the gate was shut. I tried to climb the wall with the help of a bush in order to be able to look at the place where the Saviour prayed to the Father in the agony of death before He was taken prisoner. A Turkish sentry dealt me a blow on the back with the barrel of his musket. Then I climbed the Mount of Olives. It is no easy road, there are only a few chance footpaths branching off in many directions between the olive and fig trees. There were no people here ; on the top, a few beggars lounged round the Church of the Ascension. The stone on which the Saviour left the print of His feet when he ascended to Heaven has been removed from the open air, and a little church is built above it. Near by are a monastery and other buildings, so that this place also looks different from what it did in the time of Christ. But when I turned round, there lay before me a scene which is unforgettable. Jerusalem ! Jerusalem shining golden in the morning sun ; it looked royal indeed ! If I could have imagined the proud mosque of Omar, which towered up magnificently in the foreground, to be Solomon's Temple, then the ancient royal city



lay before me as it might have been in the time of its greatest prosperity. But only as regards externals. In the background rose the high bare mountains, with olive and pine trees thinly scattered about them, and a few white villages. No sounds came up from Jerusalem other than those of bells and the Turkish call to prayers from the minarets. There had been a heavy dew in the night, an unusual thing here ; a light, bluish mist lay in the deep valley, still in shadow, that was between me and the town. From below I heard the whistle of the railway ; it had a muffled sound, like that of a small fog-horn. Between the Valley of Hinnom and the so-called Mountain of Bitterness rose something like a factory chimney, but it might have been a stone pillar.

“ I sat there for a long time that Easter morning on the fallen trunk of an olive tree, and looked out, and waited for the risen Saviour. I was unhappily not so fortunate as the women of the tomb, or as the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and, my dear friend, I was not yet in an Easter mood. Looking eastwards from the Mount of Olives you can see a strip of the Dead Sea. To-day the whole district was enveloped in such a dazzlingly brilliant atmosphere, that I saw nothing except a few tall rocks rising from the desert.

“ Feeling very sad I went down to Bethany, where the Lord loved to stay. It is a dusty, barren, stony little place surrounded by bare mountains. But the streets were fairly animated, and presented



a true oriental picture with the brown Arabs, water-carriers, dervishes and donkeys. I saw here, too, foreigners, Europeans, Germans, even a few of my travelling companions, but I avoided them. I turned back to the city in the hope of hearing a Roman Catholic Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I thought that what there was to be found of the worship of Christ in the Holy Land to-day is brought there by Europe; everything ancient has gone. As I walked over the road in the valley between the green Mount of Olives and the rocky Mountain of Bitterness, along which Christ had so often travelled, I was suddenly overpowered by a sensation of bliss. This was where He had walked; His foot had touched this earth, this very stone; He saw this mountain which I see now; He rested under the ancestors of these trees. In this place He spoke with His disciples of the Kingdom of God; here in this balmy air He first uttered the sacred words which have since then become the Compass by which humanity is guided. . . . Greatly moved, I wept aloud, and you will believe that I knelt in the middle of the road, touched the ground with outstretched arms and kissed it. Thus was I overcome in a wholly unexpected place, and, living or dying, that hour on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem is mine for all time.

“Now I will tell you another experience of this Easter expedition. From the ridge which joins the Mount of Olives to the Mountain of Bitterness, where



an uninterrupted view of the city is gained, the road turns steeply down to the Garden of Gethsemane. A Hebrew had set up his drinking booth under a fig tree. I remembered that I had not yet breakfasted, sat down on an overturned basket, and asked for some red wine. And while I rested and looked at the rocky slopes of the city which once were drenched with the blood of the Crusaders, a man came from the direction of Bethany whose appearance caused the blood to rush to my heart. He wore a long dark blue cloak which hung in smooth folds and reached to the ankles. He was bare-headed and bare-footed; his dark hair was parted in the middle and hung down over his neck; the youthful face was framed in a short beard. He walked slowly along the stony path, without a stick, one hand in his coat, the other resting on his breast; in short, I tell you this seemed the actual figure of the Saviour. When I recovered from my surprise, it seemed to me that drops of perspiration stood on his face, that he was exhausted. He may be a poor Rabbi, I thought, and I invited him by signs to sit down under the trees so that I might offer him some wine. He refused with a polite wave of the hand, and went on farther towards the Valley of Jehosaphat. My host said in Latin that for some days he had seen the man frequently, once even riding towards Bethlehem, but he did not know him. Very soon four men carrying a litter came down from the ridge and inquired of us in English



if we had seen a bare-headed man pass that way, and how far in front he was likely to be. Some Germans came behind them, one of my travelling companions among them, and they knew more about the figure so like the Saviour. He was a rich eccentric Englishman who wished to travel through Palestine after the manner of Christ, but took the precaution to have a horse led or a litter carried behind him in case of need."

**He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.**

If this article had not already a place in the confession of faith, I would place it there. When ordinary human beings form an idea for themselves of how the Saviour ascended into Heaven, what else could they imagine than that He was seen to be caught up into the blue heights of the Infinite which is called Heaven! Deliverance from the misery of this world, the reception into eternity by God the Father, cannot be more emblematically and simply alluded to. And if faith teaches us that the Saviour vanished together with His body, it is equivalent to saying, Do not seek Him here in the flesh, not in the substance, but seek thy God in the light of eternity.

If He was God and man in one, He must enter Heaven as man. And if God is everywhere, He must be in



Heaven. Now that savours of scholasticism. Scholasticism, dogmatism, have always been abhorrent to my soul, these "sciences" have always misled men in what I understand by religion. My God does not allow Himself to be mathematically affirmed or denied, and a religion that rests on reason rather than on the heart, ceases to be a religion.

Why does the Ascension leave us more cold than the Nativity or the Resurrection? It does not appeal deeply to the heart of man, it rather fills him with sorrow that the Saviour had departed again. His Spirit is, of course, often with us; but how would it be, if He still walked among us in the flesh?

Shall I tell you what would probably occur if Christ appeared among us to-day in the flesh? See how He walks in His simple coarse garment, with naked feet and bare head between arrogant cyclists and cursing coachmen? He points out to the rascals the tortures suffered by the horses, and gets a cut with the whip across His shoulders for his pains. He steps calmly through the city streets between men wearing frock coats and women in loud and fashionable costumes. The people "mock" at the bare-footed Stranger, and street boys run after Him, jeering. He partakes food sparingly and they grumble at Him. He is President of the Friends of Peace, they scorn Him. Full of meekness, He is silent when they scoff at Him, but speaks His inspired word for His ideal. He speaks at meetings of the people, and



wins enthusiastic applause from the crowd. But His richer and more distinguished adversaries declare Him a dangerous demagogue. Manchester is hostile to Him for He preaches poverty and freedom from worldly desires. Business men are hostile to Him, for He condemns usurers and Mammon-worship. The soldiers are hostile to Him because He teaches men not to defend themselves. The Tories are hostile to Him, for He says that all men are brothers. The Social Democrats are hostile to Him, for He teaches humility, contentment and subordination. The priests are hostile to Him, for He preaches that bargains must not be driven in the Temple, that God must be prayed to not in Pharisaical outward show, but in the spirit and in truth. Learned men are hostile to Him, for He works miracles not through science, but through love. His adherents are perhaps only insignificant people who reverently follow Him, testifying their joy in Him, accompanying Him in triumph through the cities shouting : " He is the man for us ! " The press declares that this cannot go on, the principles of this man are opposed to social order, to the public peace, to the safety of the state. Among His adherents there is certain to be one who is a preacher also, but who thinks he can do better, who modernizes Christ's teaching and begins to flatter the people. But he does not please the Master's adherents. That arouses his jealousy, and he informs the Prophet's enemies where and how He may be taken. The Master is caught,



and for want of a law to crucify Him, He is condemned as a demagogue to a long term of penal servitude.

That is what would happen to-day if the Saviour was on earth in the body. How good it is that He ascended into Heaven ! His first Passion and death was a blessing for the world ; His second would be a curse.

He sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. The Father always claims the place of honour ! The Heavenly Father, the Eternal, Almighty, gives the place on his right to the Son ; for that Son has the Cross with Him. So highly honoured is He who was not only God, but also man, who suffered and strove on earth, who sacrificed Himself out of love for humanity. That man who became God, that God who became man, the Father honours more than Himself who has been in Heaven since all eternity and has never suffered. There is scarcely a sentence in the Confession of Belief that touches or consoles me more than "He sitteth at the right hand of God." If the Heavenly Father so glorifies earthly suffering, how much more should we ?

**From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

The shoemaker made a very superficial observation when he said that he believed in a court of justice because the judge of the district made him atone by a fine of five gulder for slandering his neighbour, the



tailor. But the shoemaker's remark is, in its way, profound. The existence of a court of justice to deal with trifling offences proves that justice exists. If a judge exists for unimportant offences against honour, how could heavier crimes go unpunished? If the tailor had not complained, the shoemaker would not have been judged, and if the heavier crime did not come to light, it would not be punished. Where there is no accuser, there is no judge.

Who shall accuse the evil-doers before Him who sits at the right hand of God? He who sins in secret trusts in the death sacrifice of the Lord, and prays, thinking he will be forgiven; or he practises good works, performs certain penances, and thinks he will be forgiven. Will he be forgiven? The blood of the slain cries to Heaven for revenge. So do the tears of the oppressed, the curses of the deceived. As I imagine God, He will easily pardon the sins of men against God, for He must Himself be the accuser, and He is too great for that. He who said: Love your enemy, do good to them that hate thee! Could he severely punish human sins against God to whom they do no harm? No. He will less easily pardon the sins of men against each other; neither he who has been offended nor the sinner is the accuser in this case, but rather humanity as a whole. Refusal to forgive is the sin of man against his fellow-man, it is an intentional and wicked offence, an injury to his neighbour, or even to innocent creatures. If the offended persons



do not demand judgment and justice, then God Himself must act as the representative of His creatures.

I once heard the saying from the stage : Every day is a day of guilt for us, every day a day also of judgment ! I have already pointed out in a former treatise how reward follows the good, and punishment the wicked, that no outward happiness, no splendour and no fame can wipe out the inward misery of the guilty man ; that only he who has peace of heart is happy, and that only the just man has peace of heart. Is not that really judgment ? The man of the world, desiring much, soon finds that his pleasures are insipid and inadequate really to refresh him. How bitterly the selfish man feels every pain, how terrified he is of death which will deprive him of everything on which he set his heart, how despairingly he meets the inevitable ! But how calmly and submissively one who is at peace with his fellow-men endures the miseries of life, misunderstandings and offences, illness and disease ; how calmly he contemplates death, at times even he may long for it. Is not that judgment ? It is God's judgment upon earth.

Our Saviour often spoke of the Kingdom of God. But did He say where that Kingdom of God, where Heaven is ? Must Heaven be outside the natural world ? Can it not be in this life, in the human heart ?

Yes, he whose heart is full of love,  
Though he suffer early and late,  
Still the Kingdom of Heaven is his.



And it's not much otherwise with Hell. I shall soon make myself clear.

I knew a man who poisoned his wife with whom he had lived unhappily. He lived for many years after the deed on his estate in prosperity and respect—no one suspected that he was a murderer. He was generally irritable, sulky, overbearing, and reserved; people ascribed this to his pride, and esteemed him all the more; sometimes he sought society, and then he was boisterously merry, and his hilarious gaiety made him doubly welcome. But he could not laugh; his laughing was an unnecessarily loud shrieking. He was charitable; men honoured him and were never tired of praising him. Suddenly chance brought his crime to light. When at the trial he was confronted with the proofs, he did not deny his guilt for a moment, but confessed everything without circumlocution or sparing himself. He was condemned to twenty years' imprisonment. I visited him in prison a few weeks after his condemnation. How different he was from what I had feared! He was employed in basket-making, looked very healthy and fresh, and was as cheerful as if he had been the most contented workman in the world. When I was going away, he fell on my neck and said: "Peter, you cannot imagine how happy I am now. It was a bad time, it could not be worse for the damned. The frightful secret in my heart, the unceasing watchfulness that it should not be discovered, the anxiety day and night, and always the pangs of



conscience—like a lost creature, I can't express it otherwise. Now I suffer my just punishment, and need fear no more. I am at one with myself and my God. I can live and work calmly, sleep calmly, die calmly—I am redeemed ! ”

I left the man with a sacred feeling of awe. Seldom had the justice which prevails in Heaven and on earth, and which is so powerfully revealed in the heart of man, appeared so clear to me ; seldom was I as conscious of it as I was then. It is the judgment of God in the human heart. But it is only a temporal judgment which the unbeliever also undergoes.

We see further. He who sits at the right hand with the Cross will come to judge the quick and the dead. Some day when all earthly suns are extinguished, when all days are past, when the life of humanity has ended—vanished in a frozen world or lost in the ashes of a burnt-out star—then things will begin anew.

But what do I understand by the quick and the dead ? Will not every one die, and will not every one be wakened up again to life and judgment ? Which are the quick, which the dead ? I almost imagine that by the quick we are to understand the lofty-minded idealists, the joyous believers, and among the dead will be those who condemn and those who doubt. He will in His love judge both sides, and will give both what they wish : eternal life to those who joy in life, eternal death to those who need death.



Eternal light shines for one, let the other rest in peace !

I am convinced that a man whose intentions are good, who lives according to the laws of nature, and according to the holy commandments (we know them all) is not lost, does not cease to be, that he goes on living somewhere, and continues to work towards the unity of the whole and his own salvation. Will those who were opposed to Providence, who purposely injured their fellow-creatures, and degraded themselves—will they share in the salvation ardently desired by all ? Must they not rather wander restless and unredeemed through space and time, until, purified in woful longing, they shall find the Saviour. They will find him at last, all who wish to find him. I cannot possibly believe in the eternal torment of hell. Not because God is merciful, but because He is just.

Occasionally I am asked the question : “Why does a just almighty God permit the existence of so much misery and wrong ?” This question savours of earthly things, and the answer will be similar in tone : We know that the artist works with contrasts, we cannot have a consciousness of beauty without being acquainted with ugliness. And he who does not know pain, cannot be happy. Pleasure alone will not lead people to God any more than will pain alone ; when the scales balance, the indicator points upwards. It might perhaps be otherwise, but it is not, and such thoughts calm me, they awake a conception of justice



in me in which I feel secure. Love is so much spoken of in the Christianity of to-day, while justice is taken so little into account. I prefer practical justice to theoretical love. To love humanity is easy, it is merely a phrase; but to be just to your neighbour is difficult. It is devoutly to be desired that men should be always doing good to one another; yet one may be content if they do each other no harm.

**I believe in the Holy Ghost.**

Cölestin S. was a peasant at Hulschlag, in the mountains. He lived with his young wife in his father-in-law's house like a common labourer. According to a verbal promise made at his daughter's marriage, the old man ought long since to have given the land over to him, but he did not do so. It pleased him to be the master and to annoy his son-in-law with his bad moods. And when he achieved nothing by his hostile attitude, he went down into the village, drank himself into a mad anger, and returned home raging violently against Cölestin, and if the young man defended himself threatened to disinherit him. One day the young man was called out to military service, because he was not registered on the farm. In order not to be obliged to go to far-off Galicia, he and his wife vehemently implored the old man to make over the farm to him with the usual official formalities. But the old man replied: "I shall do nothing of the kind, and you'll get killed



out in Galicia." Cölestin was speechless at the thought that there should be such wicked people in the world. Then he was angry with his wife because she could not influence her father, and deeply embittered, he left his home in order to join the soldiers and to remain for an uncertain period in a foreign land. His bundle in his hand, he descended the mountain to the valley, and as he passed the miller's big pond, he saw a dark body swimming in the water. Was it a dead man? Supposing it was the old farmer who had gone to the village early in the morning and had not yet returned? Had he got drunk and fallen into the mill pond? Things would be all right in that case, for Cölestin would be the owner of the farm and no longer a soldier. When he looked closer at the object, it was not a human body but a rotten tree-trunk that had got loosened from the bank. Cölestin went on down the narrow ravine full of ill-humour and sadness that he was obliged to go, and that he had parted from his wife in anger, for she could of course do nothing against the old man's obstinacy. When he reached a place still lower down, where the footpath led across the ravine, he saw his father-in-law lying in the ditch. This time it was really he; he was not dead, only sleeping off a drunken bout. At this moment the following thoughts occurred to the young man: supposing the pond above should burst through the dam, and the water should pour down and drown him! He had lived long enough, he had injured people enough! Cölestin had never run so quickly as



he did then, his feet scarcely touched the stony ground. He went up to the dam. He opened the sluice gates—one, two, all of them, and the water poured forth. Then he hurried off. But when he heard the raging of the water from the ravine, when he saw the dark, hissing waves which were thrown up foaming against the rocky sides and poured on with gathering violence, he began to run again. A man lay below! Was not a man lying in the ditch? He must be saved before the flood reached him! In order to forestall the hurrying water, he jumped over roots and stones with great leaps, possessed ever by the thought: "I must save him!" In some places the flood was in front of him, in others, where he was able to cut off corners, he was in advance. When he reached the narrow part he saw the full fury of the waters. He jumped into the ditch, dragged the sleeping man out of it, and thrust him into safety upon the overhanging rocks. The next minute the raging waters had come down and flowed out over the meadows.

Cölestin risked his own life to save that of the man he desired to destroy. What had come over him so suddenly? What inspired him to do something quite different from what he had intended?

Was it love? Hardly. It was reason, it was conscience. It was the Holy Ghost. At least, that was how he explained it to me when he told me the tale, rejoicing over his victory.

The Evil One had tempted him for some moments



when the thought of murder arose in his mind. If he had often given evil a hearing, if he had resolutely shut out good impulses, the Holy Ghost might still have been present at the decisive moment, but the man would have paid no attention and would have become a murderer.

It is possible that the old man became kinder to the man who saved his life, and gave him the land ; but that is a matter of indifference to us. The important thing is that Cölestin was suddenly inspired with divine suggestion.

I believe in the Holy Ghost. I have but little faith in learned knowledge, but much in the performance of good and worthy deeds. I believe in the Holy Ghost, divine inspiration, and the impulse to be faithful and true to all men. That was the spirit of God through which Christ lived, and had influence and taught, and which descended on the disciples at Whitsuntide, when they were gathered together in memory of the Master. Did they derive their knowledge of God from books and dogmas ? No. Their weak hearts were strengthened and inspired by living intercourse with the Lord and His works, and thus fortified, they went boldly out into the world in order to preach to the people.

Whenever I find among men a heart eager for the good and beautiful, it is to me a manifestation of the Holy Ghost.

I believe above all in the Holy Ghost manifesting



itself in enthusiasm and courage. Burning enthusiasm is divine. Courage to confess personal convictions and live according to them is divine. Of course, this divine fire has sometimes led to the diabolical, to fanaticism that can raise hecatombs. Ordinary fire can destroy houses and towns, but who would extinguish it on that account on earth? Average men are neither hot nor cold; they are lukewarm. The attitude is a most prudent one, for they can neither burn nor freeze. Yet, what a good thing it is when an ardent man arises and enthusiastically confesses his opinion, his conviction, his belief. It does not occur to us to wonder if it is the "right" opinion, the speaker's burning heart melts the doubts of the audience, their souls are set on fire, and error is transmuted into truth by the glow of fervent conviction. Thus prophets have led nations, apostles have conquered the world, not through power, not through knowledge, but through their enthusiasm. The most impractical idea, preposterous in the eyes of the multitude, directly it arouses enthusiasm, will conquer! No invention, no law, no power in the world has accomplished what enthusiasm has done.

Enthusiasm makes a man true and frank; it gives him courage for an individual existence. Average men are not individuals, they lack personality, they think like others, speak like others, live like others, are a small part of the crowd. And should anything out of the common shyly stir in them, they have not



the energy to let it come to the surface, lest it might lead to inconvenience. Burning enthusiasm for an ideal, courage to think for oneself, to live for oneself, there is the fighter ready made, the hero, the super-human !

The fishermen of Galilee became such supermen after the Master had sent them the Holy Ghost, or, to speak more simply, after the Lord had inspired them by His life and death, by His teaching and wise words—inspired to the highest rapture of fervent hearts. And so it came to pass as we read in the history of Christianity.

Yet, a tongue of fire is not the only symbol of the Holy Ghost. The dove is its Christian emblem. But the dove signifies humility and peace. Then couple humility to enthusiasm, endurance to the courage of personality, and we have the Holy Ghost which came from Heaven, and is my light and that of all men !

#### **The Holy Catholic Church ; the Communion of Saints.**

In Austria and Hungary alone there are half a dozen kinds of Christians. Each kind declares that its creed is the right one, and each forgives the other more or less easily for its erroneous teaching. Their disputes almost always rage round subtle dogmas, and the Roman Catholic is more disliked by the thoroughly satisfied ecclesiastical Lutheran than the



heathen or the atheist. Each creed proclaims in its place of worship, and shouts in the street : I am the truth ! They are separated in the creed, but they are united in Christianity. The Gospel stands for all alike. That is my consolation and support. And this is the universal Christian Church.

“Thou art Peter, the Rock, on which I will build My Church.” That saying of the Saviour does not call up an exclusive Church in my mind, any more than it did in Christ’s. With the full power to bind or to loose which Jesus gave, not only to Peter, but to all the Apostles, there can be no foundation of an earthly hierarchy, because it would be opposed to Christ’s teaching about the Kingdom of God. It simply means that modification may be made to suit the circumstances of the time, that teachers are to be sent forth, that arrangements may be made regarding the clergy of Church communities, etc. Those communities, even at that time, differed from each other ; but everywhere where the Gospel was preached and followed, there was the Christian Church—and to-day it is still so.

If anything can cause a doubt regarding the work of God, it would be the lack of unity in the creeds, the pharisaical arrangement of sects in Christianity. Things have come to such a pass that in one sect forms, ceremonies and ritual are considered of first importance ; Christianity as handed down by the Evangelists and the early Christians becomes of second-



ary importance. Some time ago I asked the Roman Catholic Church to substitute the Gospel for the Catechism in the Schools—a demand which, on the face of it, is sensible. But I was abused by the clerical press for this impudent wish. However, I stood by my demand.

The Roman Catholic Church shows its universality and general unity on account of the fact that its Church services are held everywhere in Latin. But while by that means it recognizes the homogeneity of all nations, it sets up, on the other hand, a barrier between itself and every nation which prefers to commune with God in its own language. The longing has often come over me in Church, at the Christian festivals, for old German hymns, for I find an atmosphere of devotion in those songs. I have more than once left a church out of humour and depressed, because only Latin songs were sung there—unfamiliar music which did not touch my heart, which made of the church that ought to be my Father's house a strange and unfamiliar place.

It would sometimes seem as though the Church aimed at stripping Christianity of its popularity. Some time ago we had a beautiful, artistically produced "Nativity," a dramatic representation of the birth of the Saviour, given with the simple piety so heartfelt among the German people. The piece was performed with great reverence, and edified and deeply moved thousands. What happened? A high dignitary



of the Church forbade the performance of that religious drama ! What are we to make of such conduct ? It may be that the clergy are jealous where religion is concerned, and that they dislike every way of honouring God which is not officially provided by the Church ! I should have thought that the Church would rejoice to see the desire for religion revive in the world, and that she would endeavour to promote a sense of Christianity in secular life outside the House of God. The clergy allege that they cannot allow sacred things to be profaned. And are not sacred things profaned often enough within the Church ? I will not go farther into that matter, every one can think it over for himself. God is everywhere, and the worship of God is everywhere where hearts are uplifted, and ready to do good deeds. There is no official boundary to Christianity ! and no obstacles between a people and its God. To permit every one to base his beliefs on Christ's Sermon on the Mount in his home circle and in his own way, that is the *universal* Christian Church which embraces all Christian creeds.

There is, in fact, nothing to object to regarding the differences in forms of worship and Church customs : the southerner has one set of needs and ideals, the northerner another ; likewise, the inhabitants of the old world and of the new. The masses require a different form of worship from that of the educated classes. We might as well decide that the southerner must be dark, and the northerner must wear a red beard. They are



men and vary. The use of the Chalice or the consecrated wafer is all the same if only the Cross is recognized. The Cross is the only symbol of religion that has two arms. It embraces the world, the whole of humanity; the words, "Love one another," are eternally echoed by the Cross. You are all children of one Father who is in Heaven. In that sense, the universal Christian Church would not merely include those who hold Christian creeds, but also Jews, Turks, infidels and atheists, believers and sceptics alike, and those who are indifferent—in short, all men—which would be an excellent thing.

On the other hand, a universal religion of Love is a mediocre kind of thing. It is easier to love all than one. To love the whole of humanity usually implies nothing but a theory, love of one's neighbour demands practical sacrifice. Let the "whole of humanity" be as indifferent to you as you will, only be kind to your neighbour. If every one did that, we should have an universal Christian Church—the Kingdom of God upon earth, the communion of saints.

The cause of humanity places us in communion with all men, the Creed brings us into communion with past and future. And that is one secret of the power of Church ceremonies. Personally, I should find it very hard to sever myself from the Roman Catholic form of worship, because my parents and forefathers knelt at the Roman Catholic altar. I honour the memory of my ancestors in the Roman Catholic form



of worship ; I love my mother, my father, in it, for they left me this ecclesiastical world as an inheritance. For that reason, but not solely for that reason. The power of the heart goes deeper. The aesthetic feeling, too, attracts many to the Roman Catholic Church, which offers so much sensuous beauty for the enjoyment of its adherents ! A religious creed is handed down gradually from generation to generation in flesh and blood, so that many may feel that to leave it is not only unfaithfulness to God, but to his own self. I have repulsed the desire to leave it whenever it has threatened to overcome me. I reverence our priestly class with my whole heart, and also their form of worship in so far as it inspires men. But I am not ashamed frankly to censure certain ecclesiastical customs or bad habits which have lost their original meaning and seem to me injurious because they are empty forms. I have had a burning desire, not merely brought to life by the spirit of the age, to declare my personal disapproval of many things. If the Church has not advanced beyond the middle ages, the man of modern times cannot be satisfied with her. He comes to meet her half-way at least. In the seventies it was considered a sign of "good breeding" to mock at the religious customs and pious views of the people. In a way this was repugnant to me. I remember once at an inn when several of the more "enlightened" among the guests were making fun of a workman because he had decorated the images



of the Apostles Peter and Paul in the market place with flowers. But the workman understood how to reply. "What have our saints to do with you?" he said, "as long as we leave yours in peace. What, you say you have none? Nonsense, you have more saints than we have, to whom you erect statues, and whose festivals you celebrate. What about Saint Goethe for instance, Saint Schopenhauer, Saint Darwin, or even Saint Richard Zimmermann?<sup>1</sup> It's quite right for you to honour them if you please, but leave us ours, I beg!"

It was well put by the man; he brought the right of the Church to honour its saints into the fullest light. Not a month passes but modern society, or a section of it, favours one of its so-called saints with a celebration, whether it is Galileo, or Columbus, or Hutten, or Hans Sachs, or the Emperor Joseph, or Robespierre, or Bismarck, or any other of the greatest or smallest who have a place in the records of history.

I think, too, that the ecclesiastical belief in the intercession of saints has an appropriateness of its own.

When I, still a peasant boy, left my native mountains thirty-six years ago in order to go out into the wide world, I knelt before a cross at the roadside, on which was a picture of the fourteen intercessory saints, and prayed. Suddenly some one laid his hand on my head and the old priest of St. Catherine's stood behind me.

<sup>1</sup> A prominent freethinker of that time.



"It is good, my son, that you pray," he said. "Now tell me what you prayed for. I should like to know."

After some hesitation I confessed to the old man, until then my father confessor, that I had prayed to the fourteen intercessory saints for their intercession with God that I might be fortunate out in the world.

"I see," returned the priest. "You want to have good fortune out in the world. I quite believe it of you. But tell me, what do you think your good fortune is to bring you?"

"To find out good men, and a just progress."

"Is that all?"

"Perhaps also a good income, and a house and—and——"

"And a pretty wife, of course," added the priest quickly, "and also money and recognition."

"I shouldn't mind."

"Well, my boy, you know what's good."

"Yes, I know that. If I'd only got on as far as that."

"And," continued the old man, "the fourteen intercessory saints are to be of service to you? The penitents and martyrs? Listen to me, my son. If you ask the holy saints for earthly things, they will scarcely be able to help you. For they despised material property and will not understand how things that they considered prejudicial to the soul's salvation can be of advantage to you. But if you pray for the happiness that they themselves sought and



found, for courage, humility, contentment, patience, for preservation of innocence and a clear conscience, for love towards God, they will certainly be ready to ask God to bestow such gifts and favours on you. And, if the saints do not ask it for you, you will obtain the gifts yourself through your own fervent praying for them."

Thus he spoke. Had he said a word too much? Had he intended to explain to me for my use in the enlightened world the secret of the intercession of saints? Namely, that the blessing of prayer lies in the raising of oneself, in the awakening of a strong will, in intercourse with the type through which important bearers of Christianity influence us! If we celebrate a poet or a philosopher we raise ourselves through communion with his spirit; if we do honour to a great citizen, or inventor, or soldier, we declare ourselves in communion with his life and deeds, and if we lift our hearts to the Christian saints, we enter in communion and comradeship with them on our journey to God.

I am not in sympathy with all the figures that the Catholic Church presents to us as saints. Many a one among them seems to me too much of a self-tormentor, and too little of a Christian. I do not understand self-torture. It must be intended only as a kind of self-discipline, a hardening of the body, a strengthening of the will or so forth; or it must serve as a tender sacrifice for the well-being of another. In



that case, I consider voluntary injury, bodily pain, heroic.

Other saints of the Church are too intolerant, I find, of the other faiths. Any one who opposes the community of all men on religious grounds cannot, in the long run, feel comfortable in the Kingdom of God.

All who are of good will and aim in their own way at perfection, no matter of what race or faith they be, have, in my opinion, a claim on the communion of saints.

### **The Forgiveness of Sins.**

The Crucifixion of Christ is explained as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, as if the Saviour had taken upon Himself and atoned for the sins of all who believed in that divine sacrifice. People think that devout attendance at Mass, fervent receiving of the Sacrament, is enough to ensure forgiveness of sins. It has been said that the sinner cannot atone and be redeemed by himself; it requires the grace of God. But the grace of God comes only to him who asks for it, and even so quite undeservedly, for it can only be obtained through the deserts of Jesus Christ.

The literal explanation of that teaching has become full of mystery. A man prays for grace daily, assists every week at the sacrifice of the Mass, confesses and communicates every month—and remains a sinner. And on account of those exercises and devotions he takes on himself evil deeds, nay even crimes, his



conscience does not reproach him, he is considered a good Christian and dies an impenitent sinner.

The Church does not intend it to mean this, but she has the greatest difficulty to establish and interpret the above doctrine in a way that shall cause it to work for man's moral good, and every one is convinced that in spite of all means of grace sins will only be forgiven if they are personally atoned and compensated in every way that is humanly possible. In that case, indeed, everything would be easily forgiven that could possibly be pardoned, so that a special forgiveness would be superfluous.

There are cases where the teaching of forgiveness by grace conceals a large amount of heavenly consolation, where it uplifts a despairing man, where it actually is the outcome of Christian love.

Once at a large hunt, a rich landowner, who had organized the sport, was accidentally shot; and death came to him on an occasion which ought to have been joyous. He did not suffer much pain; but there was slow internal haemorrhage. Nevertheless he trembled and despaired in terrible fashion until the priest came to him. Then he knew that death had come. The sins he had to confess were many and serious. However rich the man was, unjustly acquired property could not be restored; for those from whom he had taken it were long since dead and gone. He had illegitimate children, but as he had not acknowledged them they had become



outcasts. One of his neighbours, an innocent man, had been imprisoned for a year and had died of shame, because the landowner had borne false witness against him. Not one of these terrible sins could now be atoned for. Who can say that he was a specially bad man? He was, like so many among us, intensely selfish. And now when in the presence of the majesty of death he felt for how little he had destroyed the nobler part of his humanity, and a terrible light was let in on him. The dying man saw eternal damnation before him, and writhed in despair. It was a picture of indescribable misery; all present trembled at the man's horrible self-accusations, and many a heart nearly broke in pity. Then the priest went up to him, administered the Sacrament, and asked whether he repented his evil deeds because of the terror of hell, or for some other reason?

"Because it was so wicked of me," groaned the dying man, "because I despise myself indescribably! Because God blessed me with good fortune and property and friends, and I have been unworthy! I have been unworthy!"

The priest laid a hand on his damp brow and said: "My brother in the Lord, you are forgiven. You cannot atone for your sins in this world; but Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross, has taken them upon Himself, has redeemed you through His precious blood. Be at peace, the Saviour receives your soul in His grace."



When the man was dead, two big tears hung on his eyelids. He died weeping for joy.

The matter might be put thus : If I do nothing to wipe out my guilt, nothing to improve my life, if I rely solely on the after-forgiveness of sins through the deserts of Christ then I shall not be forgiven. But if I do all that lies in my power to atone for my sins and crimes, and it is not enough, then the Redeemer will step in and pay the rest of my debt for me, and the persons I have injured will have to be satisfied.

When men have forgiven the misdeeds and crimes, then the Lord will cancel the debt. And if, in spite of all possible satisfaction, some of the injured persons are dissatisfied, the Saviour will speak to the penitent through the voice of His good conscience : " Come, thou art Mine ; I love you again."

Then again, the Roman Catholic Church grants forgiveness for good works, such as praying, fasting and almsgiving. The forgiveness is often assailed because those good works, as they are usually taken literally appear unimportant. When they are, they make devotees and hypocrites. But those good works can be taken in a higher sense, and then they wear a different aspect.

By praying I do not understand babbling for hours at a time the mechanical invocation of God and the saints according to prescribed formulas at stated times, often, too, for prescribed purposes. Praying means to collect our inward feelings, to turn our



thoughts to eternity, to seek the everlasting truth, to have a longing for divinity, to rise to great examples in reverence and love, to implore consolation and elevation, and especially the favour of being able to become purer and morally stronger.

By fasting I do not understand an occasional giving up of meat in order to fill the stomach with fish, eggs, and farinaceous food, but moderation and modesty in all material pleasures, the setting aside of the joys of the senses in favour of an exalted spiritual life.

By almsgiving I do not understand the bestowal of coppers on beggars in order to satisfy a sentimental pity, and to compound with the conscience of the possessor, but personal, active and continuous aid to abolish social injustices, to procure work and wages for the workman, to find opportunity to assist and improve the condition of the unfortunate and degenerate, to give proper care to the poor, sick and old, to give the lower classes opportunity to educate and ennoble themselves, to let them share in the treasures of cultured mankind.

Thus understood, the three good works of praying, fasting and almsgiving win a deep significance for men, especially at the present time. The Christian relation of man to God, to himself and to his neighbour resides in them. And if the Roman Catholic Church promises forgiveness of sins for much praying, fasting, and almsgiving, then a Luther would scarcely reject the forgiveness.



### The Resurrection of the Body.

In my early youth nothing occupied me more than the idea of the "Last Day." On Saturday evening we were always gay. We sat round the big table, and told our beads, and thought nothing of it ; then we ate mushroom soup and bacon salad and rye bread, and discussed what pleasures we were to have on Sunday. The labourers would then smoke their pipes, the maids comb their hair, and at last we all went to bed. After we had slept for many hours, father would begin to go round the house from one clock to another, would look out of the little windows, and not understand what it meant that there was no sun, no dawn. It is dark night, and the clocks already point to far on in the morning. The stars in the sky are not silvery white as usual, they are red like fiery sparks. And the sparks get gradually bigger, and shine dimly like torches ; they become fiery wheels which scatter sparks as they turn, and come ever nearer, and turn faster, so that trees and men throw ghost-like trembling shadows. Some of the fiery disks in the sky become so enormous that they knock against each other, and enkindle a mighty glow in the air. Immense masses of smoke, driven by the storm, fill the firmament. There are everywhere horrid noises of cracking. A rain of sparks falls on the earth ; houses, forests, rocks burn ; men die in infinite agony. Then all is quiet ; the heavens



are burnt out, the seas are dried up, the whole earth is a field of ashes. But there is a sound of trumpets in the air; the charred sods move. Then hands are stretched through the chasms and rifts in the ground—at first only a few, then more and more, until the whole earth is alive, a human creature come from every sod: The Dead! It is clear now that the whole earth was one graveyard. There they stand close-together in their shrouds, each terrified of his neighbour; they are still more frightened when they see acquaintances, or relatives. Many slip away, and would like to crawl under the earth again; others stand and tremble, uncertain what may be going to happen. A golden disk like the sun at dawn shines down from the sky. A wreath of white cloud appears; it gets bigger, is wafted lower: it is not a cloud, it is a company of white-winged angels, and in their midst is the Divine Majesty of Jesus Christ with the Cross.

The Last Judgment as conceived by the people.  
The Last Day!

The First Day! The first day of a new existence. Resurrection of the body, says religion; resurrection of the substance, say the scientists.

The falling of the leaves in autumn is quoted to us as an example of perishableness. It is a bad example, for in a few months fresh leaves grow on the tree, and there is a new spring which is exactly like former ones. The tree perishes after a hundred springs and autumns, but new trees spring from its rotten stump



and go through their series of springs. And man sinks into the grave as father, and rises up again as the child.

We may say that everything dies, but also that everything is destined to live. For just as we are every day confronted by death, so are we by birth. And when the globe is old and powerless, it will only rest a little, then change itself and become a new living world in the cosmos.

The reanimation and resurrection of the substance can be denied by no one. I even go so far as to believe in the resurrection of the individual. Whether the father lives in the son, whether the apparently perishing person finds the consciousness of himself again through another mystery—I believe that this consciousness of the *ego* can perhaps be interrupted, but that it cannot be destroyed.

And if the *ego* is aware only of the present, but cannot remember its past, I believe that certain causes and effects endure synthetically from one "Life" to the other which uphold and fix the individual. And so it may well be that the individual was to feel and bear the consequences of a former life in a later one. If a being was perfect in this life, he would be even more perfect in another; if it was a mean life here, it would be born again to a mean existence in the next life. That belief would be unacceptable to creatures of a low type, but is wonderfully consoling to those who strive to become purer and better,



for it approaches a nobler, more perfect life—it draws near to God. And on that road to God there is the living, moving, blossoming nature, scattering infinite roses on the path of suffering, on the triumphal procession.

### And the Life Everlasting.

Life Everlasting—Hallelujah !

But my friend, I hear people say, think of the wandering Jew ! The whole curse of humanity is embodied in the man who cannot die !

To be unable to die, to have to drag the fearful chains of endless memories of crime in a worn-out body over the lost life of earth, would indeed be damnation. But to be able to die and yet to rise again, to be able to wipe out past epochs through death and to ascend higher, to be happier with each new life—that is our divine lot.

And you, my brother, are so tired. You desire to sleep for ever, to know nothing of immortality ! You ought not to wish that. Lay your body down and rest well, and then you will have courage for a new flight to Heaven. I see that you have suffered much, and that you are wounded and sick ; then be glad that it is the eve of a holiday. And to-morrow beneath the bright sunshine there is a new day, and a new man with a young heart longing for happiness.

You say you cannot imagine that you will exist. I cannot imagine that you will not exist. For you



are—I am, and therein lies the best proof that I was and that I shall be.

It would be foolishness to think that you only have a little piece of life between an eternal past and an eternal future. To have had no existence in the past, to have none in the future, only just the few years now ! How can that be ?

To emerge but for a moment from the sea of eternity, and snap at flies, with no other destiny. Then indeed might a man play practical jokes in the hurry of this cursory life, out of which he vanishes for ever without any responsibility. He could venture on a bold game with himself and others for everything and for nothing, and grow arrogant or destroy as he pleased—the more the better. But it is not so. If he kills himself, he will live again, and the more wicked his conduct, the deeper will he live again in damnation in the future.

Make yourself good, make yourself blessed, for you will be. You cannot flee, and death, in which you want to hide your old Adam, is only an asylum for a short time ; he will very soon turn you out, render you up to your destiny, to become perfect. You cannot escape, and you will continue to suffer, obstinately hoping, until you repent, and then you will continue to strive until you are perfect.

Man, you mysterious, immortal being ! Do not forget that all other creatures move with you in the circle of immortality. What you destroy with your hand, crush with your foot, annihilate with a hostile



heart, the scientists believe that the atoms are indestructible ; the mystics believe that death is not so much a taking away of the soul from the body as a disembodying of the soul ; revelation believes that the beasts are immortal. Keep friends with the animals who, like you, must strive upwards ; if they now stand a few steps lower than you, take care that the violent whipping you deal your patient horse does not cast you down lower than the beast ! Win the confidence of all the living things of the wide world, for you will meet them on your journey through eternity, and you and all of us will continue to draw nearer until infinite perfection unites us in one single blessed existence.

Who, knowing this, can refrain from weeping for joy ? That we are not lost, cannot be lost ! That we are all with God, some erring, hesitating, doubting at His feet, others loving, believing and hoping on His breast.

And first and last I unite in the holy revelation in the joyful confession :

*I believe in God and the Life Everlasting. Amen.*



## Chapter II

### CHRIST ON THE HEATH

**H**IGH up where the boundaries of two countries touch stretches the broad tableland. It is infinitely lonely, a barren land, an interminable sea, on which the jutting white stones give the illusion of cliffs or sailing boats. A stunted pale-coloured grass grows on the sandy earth, with clumps of heather, and here and there clumps of stunted junipers and pines.

The Holy Heath.

No one exactly knows why the district is called the Holy Heath. It must be on account of the holy silence that pervades it, or on account of the violent storms that often break over it like the angry breath of God. A little old woman may be seen limping between the rocks: and she knows why the heath is holy. More years ago than can be reckoned, when the angels were building the heavenly Jerusalem, the stones they were carrying on their heads fell off just here on to the earth, and there they still lie to-day. Perhaps men might now build a heavenly Zion on earth with those stones. They sometimes try, but the stones are heavy! It might well be that the shepherds who



dwell on the heath might learn how to build from the angels whom they often hear sing in their distress.

Here and there on the heath are far-stretching furrows in which the pasturing sheep find no grass, but they often lie in them at noon and sun themselves. In other places on the heath there are basin-shaped holes containing pools of water. There the shepherds water their sheep and goats. Almost in the centre of the barren places there is an oasis. Little boggy meadows may be seen, and gardens in which black mould lies between the white stones, and where wild fruit trees and vegetables grow. They are fenced in by roughly built stone walls. Almost at the upper end of the oasis are two enormous rocks, so close together that there is only room for the path between them ; they are cube-shaped, overgrown with grey moss, and from a distance look like cathedral towers. Springs gush from beneath one of the rocks, and numerous cottages stand around, thinly scattered over meadow and heath, in which the shepherds and peasants live. The houses are built of stone, whitewashed, and have flat roofs of small shingles. The footpaths which lead from one dwelling or stable to another go over uneven ground, and except for a few black thorn-bushes, wild fruit trees and firs, all is barren.

Many strangers who come to the heath by chance have found a great charm in it. One whom it specially pleased took away something of its charm. He erected at the lower end of the village two large buildings, one of



which has many chimneys that pour forth smoke the whole day. Farther on at the side are quarries in which the ring of the hammer is unceasingly heard. Many years ago a bold man came from the north, and founded limestone works, and made a broad road in the direction from which he had come, and where a few miles distant there are fertile and populous districts. It is the beginning of a large kingdom which the heath-dwellers like to call the land of their ancestors, because it is said that in ancient times their forefathers wandered thence to the heath.

If you ascend one of the big cubical rocks in which an Englishman had had steps hewn, and the atmosphere is very clear, looking southwards over the heath in the far distance a blue jagged range of mountains may be seen, behind which lies a district that the heath-dwellers call the land of the strangers. A people live there whose language no one born on the Holy Heath can understand; they are, however, united to them by a rough road, by an old belief: by much else that they never think of. They do not care to look towards the south, they much prefer the north, whence came the bold, kindly man, whither the broad road leads, and where the fertile populous districts are in the land of their ancestors.

The church stands near the rocks at the edge of the settlement on a raised foundation of stones. It is surrounded by a circular wall, and is a light building with two aisles and a little pointed tower on the roof.



St. Christopher is the patron of the church. He is painted on the outside of the wall carrying the Infant Jesus across the stream. The village is called Christopher after the saint, and the people who like to shorten everything and make things comfortable, call it "Christ." Christ on the heath. The church is not fifty years old. It was built on the site of an ancient chapel, and was endowed for the heath-dwellers by the Englishman who cut the steps in the rock. He spent several summers on the quiet heath and there recovered his lost health, and out of gratitude did much that is of use to the poor settlement to-day. Behind the church is the priest's house; it stands—apparently without foundation—on an enormous stony platform, which forms an admirable pavement all round. Pinks, pelargoniums and other flowers bloom in the windows of the house; they are not set there from inside by a housekeeper, but are spontaneous offerings from outside. For the people of Christopher love the priest. And this story was told by the priest.

It has already been mentioned that away behind the blue mountains, the "stranger people" live. According to the reports of the heath-dwellers the men have short legs, big heads, sharp noses and very black hair. They are very hard-working and clever, and desirous of power, and anxious to trade with the heath and to bring them gradually under their sway. The clergy of the Roman Catholic Church beyond the mountains greatly desired to interest themselves in



the lonely heath-dwellers, and to protect them from the powerful northern kingdom which had another ruler and another belief. The bonds which joined the heath to the land beyond the mountains were to be increased and strengthened. But the more the people [there tried to attract them, the more the inhabitants of Christopher strove against them. And greatly as they had formerly loved their priest, his pastoral letters no longer pleased them. For they always favoured the "stranger folk," and sought to introduce the "stranger" language into the choral part of the service in the Church of St. Christopher. But the pastoral letters came from the bishop, and the priest had to read them from the pulpit. Then most of the congregation went out of the door, and only the children and old women remained in their places. And now the man from the land of their ancestors, the wealthy owner of the limestone works, stepped in.

The inhabitants of Christopher called him the Captain<sup>1</sup> and for two reasons. First, because his name was Hauptmann<sup>2</sup>, and second, because they had appointed him Captain. Because he was the most thriving man in the place, and employed a great many people and helped others with advice and acts of kindness, because he was wise and charitable, they made him the captain of the village, leader and counsellor, for except the tax commissioners and the recruiting officers

<sup>1</sup> In German *Hauptmann*, which is also a common surname.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. German for captain.



from beyond the mountains no one troubled themselves about the outlying village on the Holy Heath. The Captain quietly fostered a discontent. It began in discussions, and deliberations in small circles; then in larger gatherings in the meadow at which everything was considered and explained. The heath shepherds are very inquisitive. The stone-breakers and resin-scrapers were not less so, for in their loneliness they learnt nothing; and so they were also present. On Sundays the Captain had horses put to the carriages and drove with the elder members of the community along the long road to the villages of the outskirts so that they might see another kind of social life, another ecclesiastical authority, and another sort of divine worship. Those who went once wished to go again, and made their neighbours go with them. But it became more and more lonely at St. Christopher's, and the priest bore a heavy heart to the altar.

He was an old man over seventy. Hitherto he had a round, rosy face under his white hair, his blue eyes gazed trueheartedly and goodhumouredly into the village and out over the heath. And when the slender figure in the long gown and white neck cloth stood in front of the house, they were very proud of their handsome, good priest.

The sacristan and his wife looked after the old man. And on his account Frau Gertrud was always quarrelling with the beggars to whom he gave his coats, boots and stockings. Once a journeyman's



wife begged an old shirt of him for swaddling clothes. The priest was very sorry that he had no old shirts, but his housekeeper had lately made a new one—would that do? Gipsies liked to have their children baptized by the heath priest because he always presented them with a christening gift; and his housekeeper always told him: “But, my God, sir, we’re filling their pockets over and over again. How often are these wretches christened!” The priest rejected the suspicion that any one would be repeatedly baptized for worldly reasons. But he finally said, “better once too often than not at all.”

He was like that; the people often laughed at the white-haired child, they sometimes played a little on his incredulity, but they loved him.

And on a sudden all was destroyed. Since the Sunday on which he had had to read from the pulpit a specially remarkable order from the authorities—in which nothing less was desired than that the heath-dwellers should diminish their intercourse with the inhabitants of the outermost land, and connect themselves more closely with the people beyond the mountains—everything was lost.

When the priest crossed the churchyard after the service, he noticed how the people drew away from him, and he heard a man say to his neighbour: “I’d rather be burnt than read that stuff from the pulpit.”

When the priest entered his house, the sacristan’s



wife stood at the door of his room with her broom, and said loudly : " Are you tired, sir ? "

" Why, Gertrud ? "

" Or what's the matter then ? that you can't preach any more ! that you read out those things to us ! "

" But, my good woman ! " exclaimed the priest laughing, " that was the episcopal pastoral letter. Didn't you know that one comes every year ? "

She shook her head. One like that did not come every year.

Then the sacristan came out of his room saying nothing but " Sir, Sir ! "

The priest asked what they meant by this conduct ? Could he disregard his bishop's bidding ? Was not a Roman Catholic priest bound to observe the strictest obedience ? Had there not been Pastoral Letters since the time of the Apostles, and was it not the duty of the shepherd of souls in unquiet times to instruct his flock ? The Church was not there to separate the nations if they could be separated, but much more to unite all men in love, in order that there should be a shepherd and a flock.

The sacristan and his wife said they did not wish to dispute with a clergyman, but they should think their own thoughts.

The priest, anxious and vexed, walked up and down his room for a long time. If he could only speak frankly ! He had himself felt that something was expected that was against nature. There had indeed



been times when the people had put up with much; but supposing they would not put up with things, then—but a Roman Catholic priest should not think so broadly. He must not think, he must pray. But his thoughts could not be stifled, and he struck his hand against his breast: “Be silent, old shepherd! Are those things for a priest’s jubilee?” And instead of praying, he went on thinking: “You cannot have done so very much for your Church or your jubilee would scarcely find you on the heath. Or were you too stupid? Be comforted, you white-haired boy, it won’t last much longer.

But before what the good man thought would happen, did happen, he was to have a very strange experience.

\* \* \* \* \*

One day, when the priest returned from visiting a sick parishioner, five men were standing on the pavement in front of his house. They were the elders of the congregation, the Captain at their head. They wore their Sunday clothes, and bore themselves with solemn ceremony. The priest thought he knew why they had come. He had heard a rumour that something was to be done to celebrate his jubilee. And he knew what had to be said. The congregation of Christopher had hitherto only celebrated festivals to God and His beloved saints. He did not put himself on that level. But if they wished to do something to give him pleasure on the occasion of his fifty years’ pastorate, they might give a good



dinner and a warm garment to the three poor sick wretches who starved and froze on the heath. The old man politely invited his visitors to go into the house with him ; they were all embarrassed and the Captain disputed with the priest as to who should go first. Each wished the others to have the honour until the priest exclaimed, laughing : " Well, are the heath peasants now so domineering ? Then must I in God's name play the discourteous peasant," and entered first. As he went up the steps he felt suddenly a weight on his heart : Now you've certainly offended the Captain. He's no peasant, he's a rich lime-burner. But he saw no way of making good his unconsidered speech. The Captain who, however, betrayed no annoyance, was rather formal and embarrassed.

They stood in the room before the priest and cleared their throats. They would not sit down or put down their hats. The Captain stood in front and wiped his face with his handkerchief. The lines in his forehead lay in long furrows.

" Reverend Sir ! " he began at last, " we come to-day on a matter of importance which—I think—ought not greatly to surprise your reverence. You have yourself seen what is going on. I must tell you at once that nothing is farther from the minds of the congregation than putting the responsibility on their priest, because they know that he dares not act in accordance with his good heart, that he is compelled to obey the authorities, and they think that he himself



is suffering under them. Now the state of things is this : We can no longer reconcile it with our conscience to belong to a Church which often demands too much of the reason with which God has endowed man, which in these times does not recognize the rights of the people, which has in its latest decree struck us a blow in the face. We are commissioned to inform your reverence that the congregation of Christopher, with very few exceptions, has left the Roman Catholic Church."

His breath almost forsook him during this speech. Then, his hand trembling, he drew a paper from his pocket. "Here is the announcement with the signatures. Everything is already put before the secular authorities."

It was strange how quietly the old priest stood there ! He had only put his hand behind him to feel for the corner of the table, and thus supporting himself stood motionless as a pillar. The ruddy colour left his face. As he said nothing, the Captain' who had put the document on the table, added : "We beg you to believe, sir, that you have our sincere respect,."

Then the old man said : "To experience this day . . ." He turned and added : "I never expected that." And after a pause : "Let God's will be done."

He was tottering towards the next room when the Captain seized the priest's right hand with both his. It was as cold as stone.



"Sir, don't go away. Nothing in my life has ever been so hard as this commission. We know how close are the relations between you and us, the heath-dwellers. With respect to our priest we can indeed say that there never was a better shepherd. We cannot imagine to ourselves what it would mean to lose you. What would the poor on the heath do if no father went round and brought them bread ! Who would reconcile the quarrymen and the shepherds ? We can scarcely realize that the Gospel could be preached to us on the heath by any but the faithful man who has proved to us in his life and acts that he is at heart an evangelical Christian. Sir, stay with us !"

The other four came closer and said : "We implore you, most reverend priest, stay with us, stay with us !"

The priest got red in the face, his white bushy eyebrows stood on end, he exclaimed loudly and shrilly : "How can I stay with you, if you have all become renegades !"

"We have not become renegades," said the Captain, "our confession brings us back to you. Not to that which you say but rather to what you teach by your personal example. It is many years ago, but the people still speak of it, that you were offered a rich benefice beyond the mountains. But you decided for the heath, and to remain poor among the people to whom you belonged rather than to be rich among strangers."

"My God, yes !" said the priest, "and I've never



regretted it. Because I always thought I could strengthen and raise this congregation in Christianity."

"You have done so," said the Captain quickly. "Other communities remain in their ignorance because they are indifferent, because they consider it superfluous to decide whether one form of belief is worth more to them than another. We should have become just the same if your example had not given us strength, the evangelical strength, to confess frankly pure Christianity. I need only remind you of the wandering mechanic who two years ago was found dying up among the rocks."

"I know how it was," interrupted the sacristan, stepping forward. "The man came from Nuremberg where they are Lutherans. The shepherds found him, and he said he must die, for blood streamed from his mouth. He asked for Christian consolation. When the priest came in his cope, the man was terrified and whined: 'No, no, I will remain a Protestant?' 'But so you shall,' said the priest kindly, and he comforted him so well out of the Gospel, that the poor man departed with tears of joy in his eyes. He was buried in our churchyard and the burial service read over him."

"Yes, that is exactly what happened," the others confirmed. But the priest made a gesture of denial with his hands: "That is just what I have to reproach myself with, that I was too lax, that I yielded too much to my personal inclinations. Now the fruit



is ripe, and I acknowledge my error which God may forgive; but the Church will never forgive."

"We can easily believe," said the Captain, "that you will be made to pay bitterly for your Christian large-heartedness. They will have no more confidence in you, and they will not give you another sphere of activity, and no one can supply your place here. So stay with us. We followed your example in Christian intention, now follow ours. Be what you have long been, long before we were so—an evangelical Christian. And remain our pastor."

"Remain our pastor," they all exclaimed, and folded their hands. When he tried to escape, they held him by the coat, and exclaimed imploringly, longingly : "Our pastor ! we cannot let him go."

A crowd of people had assembled in front of the priest's house by this time, and when they heard the shouting inside, pressed in at the door and cried also : "The priest must stay with us ! He must become evangelical too ! He must stay with us !"

In the excitement some one rang the church bells, and they seemed to call also : "Stay—here. Stay—here."

At last it grew quieter, and they waited for an answer. The priest wiped the perspiration from his brow. He looked at the people with the saddest expression and said : "Dear children, what do you want of me ? At a time when it is my duty to make you realize your error, shall I be guilty of treason ?



Standing on the edge of the grave shall I break my oath? How can you possibly impute such a thing to me after you have said that I taught you the truth? I will not tell you now what you deserve to hear. I understand the suffering but not the disputing Church. I accuse myself as a bad shepherd who has lost the flock entrusted to him."

"No, you must not speak like that," exclaimed several of them, "we must have your blessing in this important matter . . . !" They desired quite rebelliously that he, the Roman Catholic priest, should bless their entry into the Evangelical Church! He would have smiled at the notion had he not felt so inexpressibly sad.

"What can there be as blessing?" stammered the old man at last. "I wish you only good . . . only good. . . ."

He could say no more, his throat seemed closed up. He turned to the window and drew the white curtain backwards and forwards as if desirous of shutting out the sun. One of them went up to him—and then drew back. And he whispered to the others, "He is weeping."

Then they went out slowly, one after the other, stood about in groups for a time in the street, and at length separated and went home. The wife of the resingatherer asked her husband on his return: "Where have you been?" and the man answered, "At a funeral."



When the old priest was alone in his room, he sank half fainting into the big leather armchair, and sat there rigid. He folded his hands in his lap and sat on without moving. The bells were ringing from the little tower, and it seemed as if they called to him : "Come—come—come." Yes, that's it, he will go to his beloved church, there he is at home. He will kneel before the Virgin, and tell her all. She had always been his consoler whenever in loneliness of heart he had despaired utterly.

The altar of the Virgin stood in the right aisle of the church. It was a kind of separate chapel. By the light of a red hanging lamp, all sorts of sacrificial images, flowers and wreaths made of coloured paper could be seen on the wall in the semi-darkness. The statue, the image of the Virgin, stood over the altar in a niche surrounded by numerous candles. The figure was of the size of a three-year-old child, and was clothed in a bell-shaped, wide-spreading red silk cloak, edged with gold frillings. Only the hand that held the sceptre and the dark brown face could be seen of the statue itself. A glittering double crown, as a sign that Mary was Queen of Heaven and of earth, was set on her head, and flaxen hair hung down on each side. The statue had come from the old chapel. Time and faith had lent it great holiness.

The priest walked through the church, bowed before the high altar where a large crucifix hung over the tabernacle, and turned into the aisle in order to visit



his intercessor. He saw something moving high up by the statue. A man stood on the altar table doing something to the image. It was Isidor, the shepherd, the possessor of many sheep, who carried on a trade in wool, and was a patron of the Church.

"Isidor," said the priest, "is that you? what are you doing up there?"

The shepherd, a lean, wrinkled man, did not stand on ceremony. He was undressing the Virgin. He said to the priest in answer: "I presented a silken cloak to this figure. But it's only a figure, and so it's idol worship."

"Are you one of the converts?" asked the priest.

"Yes, I've signed, of course. We've all signed. And I'm making up for my past foolishness."

When he had unfastened the red garment, he folded it carefully, put it in the pocket of his rough woollen coat, and went off whistling. The priest stood dazed before the naked statue. It was no longer beautiful. It was a seated, ill-carved wooden figure, black with dirt, so that the golden crown was sadly out of place.

The old man merely said: "Oh! Oh! Oh!" and continued standing there. In face of the mischief he could not pray. He gazed upwards, pressing his hands against his heaving breast . . . Isidor, the shepherd, went to the neighbours and told them what he had done, so that they might see how earnest he was in adopting the new faith. And he never guessed how he had hurt the priest.



The priest celebrated mass as usual on the days that followed. The sacristan, who had always assisted him at the altar, was gentler than usual, but he let it be seen that although he gave his services willingly, they were only temporary. He put fresh candles, but would no longer swing the censer. The church was almost empty. An old woman or two kneeled, and told their beads.

The priest wrote to the ecclesiastical authorities, sent them the document relating to the withdrawal, told them everything, and accused himself. He had nothing of importance to reproach himself for in his conduct, but he had certainly shown too little energy in ecclesiastical matters. He had also been too lukewarm in the sacrifice of the mass, in administering the sacraments and so forth. He had even occasionally allowed his thoughts to wander towards worldly things during divine service, and therefore much had been performed mechanically. If the congregation goes the wrong way it is primarily the fault of the priest who should protect and guide it. And when a misfortune of this kind happens, the priest's incapacity is laid open to the light of day. He begged to be summoned, and to be told his punishment.

After a while the post brought the answer from the ecclesiastical authorities. It was less severe than the priest had expected. It was composed by one of the canons who had formerly been friendly towards him. He wrote that an examination would shortly be made



into the unhappy business at Christopher. The congregation made a great mistake if they thought they could so unceremoniously renounce the Roman Catholic Church. The point of view would soon be made clear to them. The document went on to state that everywhere the Roman Catholic Church was assailed by violent storm, that people were incited to leave it, and that the fault lay less with the priest, although many did fail in their duty, than with the unchristian, freethinking spirit of the age. Finally the old man was advised to retire into a clerical asylum. The last sentence drew a sigh from the old man.

Meanwhile on the heath they were discussing how the Church of Christopher had been partly founded by the congregation, and partly largely endowed by the Englishman who had once spent several summers on the holy heath, and there recovered his health. The other side could make no claim to the church or to the priest's house, they were entirely the property of the congregation, so that it had the right of installing a pastor there at any moment.

One day the Captain paid the priest a visit. The old man sat on a bench by the churchyard wall. The Captain remarked that the evening was cool, and that the priest was wearing only a thin coat.

"Thank you, thank you," replied the old man almost cheerfully, "I'm always warm, always warm!" The truth was that a few days before he had given his warm coat "to a brawling beggar," as his house-



keeper put it. The Captain sat down by him, and after a long conversation on various matters, asked the priest if he had any wishes to tell them to him in confidence.

"I have no wishes, honoured sir," replied the priest; "but I would ask a great favour of you. The house here, as you see, is not in the best of order, and I should like a few weeks' grace, so that I may improve its condition a little. The mason has promised to come to-morrow, but there's always a bother with locksmiths and glaziers, even when they are to be had. But with time everything shall be properly repaired."

"But, sir, what are you thinking of?" exclaimed the Captain, "that's the congregation's business, I shall look after that. You had better tell me your wishes with regard to the rooms you'd like to keep for yourself. I think the big one on the sunny side with the open view of heath and sky. Heath and sky are the most beautiful things we have here, aren't they?"

"Heath and heaven, yes, yes, they are indeed beautiful," said the priest, and added, sadly reflecting, "the one I've had long enough—the other I must first deserve."

The Captain seized the priest's hand. "It pains me to see you so sad. Of course it cannot be otherwise. Everything is ordered according to a higher decree, and hearts must break."

"Very true, sir. It is God's will."



"I too have suffered," said the Captain. "I should like to tell you, but we must move about a little."

They got up and walked over the grass round and round the church.

"We evangelicals," said the Captain, "sometimes feel the need of confession, especially when you are placed in a position of unintentionally hurting any one. Under such circumstances a man likes to justify himself. I am in that position towards you."

"You are doubtless acting according to your conscience," returned the priest.

"Yes, but until you are at one with your conscience ! Many people are without one for a long time, or they have a false one. You would hardly believe how heavily questions of conscience have weighed on the simple man of business during the whole of his life. Things are better now, I lead a happy domestic life, my undertakings prosper, and I am so much respected that people call me king of the heath. And yet there are times when I envy you."

"Me ? " asked the old man eagerly, almost merrily.

"For your peace of heart. I've been through bad times for the sake of that precious thing. I come—you must know—of a well-to-do family in Franconia. My youth was such that at thirty years of age I thought my disgust with the world must kill me. In accordance with my father's wish I should have taken over his pottery works, but a sort of madness drew me away in search of something, I knew not what. How stupid



and even comic it was that I sought it through the whole world, till at last it became clear to me in a barren lonely district that my wanderings were, so to speak, only a chase after the eternal truth ; the lonely district was this heath. I found calmness and peace in this serious aspect of nature, and I determined to settle here. In order to have something to occupy me, I erected the lime works. I had gained some knowledge of that industry in my father's business. As you know, I built myself a house and married the shepherd's daughter. But business and love did not fill my heart, and I was again attacked by restlessness, hunger for truth. Have you ever heard of that disease ? To ransack all philosophies, all religions until you become a confirmed atheist. Then you are indeed building on sand. Now a man with whom I had been corresponding sent me a book. It was an entire novelty for me : the Bible. I had always lived in the belief that I knew the Gospel ; it was impressed on me as a boy, it's the basis of our view of the world. And as I read the book on the quiet heath, you must know, sir, that a totally different Christ rose up before me, entirely unlike the vague figure presented by uncomprehended religious instruction—a strong, active, joyful Christ, a man with whom you could live in the closest friendship. Just as I live in body and soul, so had He lived. In the letter many things seemed to me contradictory, but in life they were proved correct. I found my destiny as a man, my relation to



my fellow-men, my faith, and my trust in the Heavenly Father. The solitude of the heath taught me to understand the Gospel, and the poor heath-dwellers helped to prove its truth; that is, you know, sir, what stood between us according to our conviction. So I began to encourage the people, held evangelical evenings. With all that followed you are acquainted. I regard what has happened as the life-task laid on me by God; but you cannot fail to see in me the wolf who has destroyed the flock."

The old man made a gesture of denial. He took a deep breath as if about to speak, but remained silent.

The Captain stood still, looked affectionately into the priest's sad eyes, and held out both his hands.

The priest said softly: "It is God's will," and gave him his right hand.

"I do not relinquish the hope that we shall come to understand each other better."

"We understand each other—we understand each other," the priest assured him.

"Then you will feel yourself at home here as before," said the Captain; "we all reverence you as our patriarch. Nothing can happen to hurt your convictions. The pastor, whom we expect shortly, will observe all respect."

"I know it, I know it," said the old man, who had, as it were, retired more and more into himself during the conversation. The Captain was so glad to have eased his heart that he did not notice that each of his



words must of necessity separate him more and more from the old priest, who heard in them the reminder : Priest, you belong to us no more. A few days after this visit, two envoys arrived from the ecclesiastical authorities. They had a long interview with the priest, and then paid a visit of ceremony to the Captain. He invited them to dinner, but they could not accept on account of the journey that lay before them. They saw that there was nothing more for them to do in this village. After packing up all sorts of documents, and removing the tabernacle from the high altar, they went on their way. They advised the priest to go in person to the bishop, and make his defence.

The old man went about lonely, and knew not what it would be best to do.

His house was full of life. Masons at the walls, tilers on the roof, locksmiths at the doors, glaziers at the windows, carpenters on the floors, ironmongers at the stoves. The priest recognized how terribly out of repair his dwelling must have been. He had never thought about it, neither had the congregation.

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One evening the old man walked through the village. He stopped before some of the houses, but did not go in. Children driving the sheep home kissed his hand. He laid it on their heads and said : "God be with you." Then he went on farther. The church stood out against the golden evening sky ; the swallows



circled round the steep roof. He went up the steps ; but the door was locked. With bared head he stood before it for a long time. Then he walked through the churchyard. He stopped to look at certain mounds. For twenty-three years he had sent all those buried here to the grave with the peace of God.

The housekeeper called from the house : " Where are you, sir ? Are you not hungry ? "

He went in and ate his supper of bread and milk. When he had finished he took a small hand-portmanteau, that he had used formerly for short journeys, out of the cupboard. It was covered with striped canvas and worn at the corners. He placed all his property in it, and shut it firmly. Then he put on his mountain boots, the light black woollen coat, the broad-rimmed felt hat, and took his stick. He sat by the open window, and gazed out into the warm summer night.

All was quiet in the village. The big cubical rock stood out like a tall black plinth against the background of the pale sky. The moon had risen behind it. Now was the time. The old man took his hat, portmanteau and stick and crept out. As he did not understand the art of slinking away, he knocked up against a lime cask in the dark porch. His stick fell from his hand and clattered down the steps. But the sacristan and his wife did not hear. Quicker than he had walked for years he hurried through the little garden, on between the fences and the cottages towards the gentle ascent. Behind the hill he saw a



light. It came from the cottage of old Tobias, who had been dying for some days past. The priest had gone to see him yesterday, but he would not receive the sacrament. Tobias, too, had forsaken the faith of his fathers, and his peace of soul was so great that repentance could not be hoped for. That was incomprehensible to the old priest. He felt as if he must visit the sick man again, give him absolution and administer the last sacrament. No, he had no longer any right to do that. He must go away from them all, secretly, without farewell, because he feared to succumb under the farewell. He had become a stranger among his own people on the Holy Heath, and had to seek a refuge beyond the mountains—among strangers. Out by the last barn was the pillar with the picture of St. Christopher. The priest stood there quietly for a while. The procession had always gone as far as that pillar on Corpus Christi day. They had accompanied the Host with candles, wreaths and banners, with joyful bells, and praying hearts. It was a worship of God with which everything was united that the inhabitants could summon of beauty, splendour, and gladness of heart. Now that was all over—over for him and for them—and for ever. Oh, Holy Heath, how poor thou art become . . . ! Once more the priest looked back at the roofs of the village shimmering in the moonlight, the rocks rising up from them like two dark cathedral towers. And then he went on.

He did not take the narrow footpath which led to



the mountains, he wandered westwards along the rough stony road. Only the bare rock was to be seen, which was here and there overgrown with briars. The wayfarer often stopped for a little, and changed the portmanteau from one hand to the other. The longer he went on, the more often he did this. Occasionally he took his hat off, and wiped his head and face with his handkerchief. The air was close. The moon was high, and the white stones scattered at wide intervals over the heath looked like tombstones in an immense graveyard. Dark patches of cloud had come up in the western sky and extinguished the pale stars. A red reflection glowed in the clouds. It must have been midnight, the moon stood so high and the shadow was so short that glided at the wayfarer's feet. He rested at length on a broad flat stone, one of those which lay here and there on the ground between the sand and the brushwood. He sat down, his hands supported on his stick and gazed at the lifeless solitude. He looked back over his life that had begun poor in a mountain hut, and had suffered so fatal a shipwreck in this desert. His honest wits, his patient self-denial had all been of no avail.

The moon was no longer bright; it had assumed a milky tinge. It was warm, still and peaceful. The old man stretched himself on the flat stone and laid his head on his little portmanteau.

At the same time a belated carriage rolled along the road; there was a horse, a coachman and an



occupant. The last seemed to be a youngish man, who often turned his head to observe the sky, in which the lightning became more continuous and vivid. Perhaps he was a little anxious, the carriage was an open one. The heath was so unfamiliar, so extraordinarily barren—he had never seen a district like it before. The coachman had to assure him several times that they were on the right road to Christopher.

Then the occupant of the carriage pulled the coachman's coat-tail as if it was a bell-rope; he wanted to stop. It seemed to him, if the moonlight was not deceiving him, that a man lay by the side of the road. And so the traveller found our old priest. He was fast asleep and could hardly be roused. When he was violently shaken by the shoulders, he pulled himself together, grasped his portmanteau and stick, and wanted to go on.

The traveller held him back, and asked where he was going in the night?

"I'll be all right directly, I'll be all right directly," said the old man hoarsely, sleepily.

"How could you sleep here with the storm coming on?"

"I'll be all right directly," repeated the old man.

"Holy Mother Anne," suddenly exclaimed the coachman, "it's our priest, our old priest!"

The traveller understood in a moment.

"What, sir, you were going away and at such a time? or have you lost your way?" he asked.



"Lost my way, lost my way," stammered the old man.

"Get into the carriage with me."

"Thank you very much, very much indeed," answered the priest. "Are you going across the mountains too?"

The rumbling in the sky, violent gusts of wind, and heavy drops of rain helped the traveller in deciding the old man to enter the carriage. The portmanteau at his feet, and his stick in his hand, as if he was still walking, the old man cowered down in a corner of the carriage. He allowed the stranger to wrap his own cloak round him when the storm actually broke forth, and then he fell asleep again. The flashes of lightning made it possible for the traveller to look at his guest. The coachman might almost have said: "It's not he!" His cheeks had fallen in, his thick hair was unkempt, his beard uncared for. The white neck-cloth was loosened at one side, but there was no doubt that it was the priest. The storm whistled in the air, and dashed grains of sand into their faces. Dark cloud-forms flew across the sky, the foremost streaks like pointed wings, claws and greedy jaws. The moon was hidden, the heath wrapped in darkness, the stones were lighted up by every flash of lightning, as if flames burst out of the ground. The coachman had to hold in his horse, terrified by the thunder-claps; the carriage ran jerkily over the rough road, and the flood of rain descended. The traveller drew close to the sleeper,



put an arm round him in order to keep his hat, cloak and himself safe, but could not protect him against the downpouring rain. He himself was already wet to the skin, but his face looked fresh and cheerful. The coachman, who saw it when it lightened, wondered how a man could look so pleased in such awful weather. He did not understand that it may be a pleasure to submit to the fury of the elements so that the dust of every day or a terror of the soul may be cleansed.

When after a while storm and rain had calmed down, wreaths of white mist rose over the heath, and day dawned. The air was cold. The rocky ground shimmered here and there like snow, and over an eminence the two great rocks towered up. They reached the stone ramparts, the first cottages. Sound of bells could be heard, the shepherds, carrying their hats in their hands, for it was the hour of matins, were leading out their sheep. When the carriage had come so far, the coachman pointed with his whip-handle and said : "Reverend pastor, that is the church."

Then he drove over the square to the inn, where the traveller got down. The old priest was taken to his former house.

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At every hour of the day people might be seen hurrying along the village streets to the priest's house—men, women and children. Some carried baskets, bundles and jugs with them ; but the eggs, milk and



legs of mutton could not be accepted. The priest was too desperately ill.

There had been great excitement when it was known that the old man had gone away in the night, and had lain down on the heath. Had not the new pastor passed that way he might have perished. Then he had become seriously ill, had been delirious for days, and those who listened at the door could hear how he sang the Latin Mass in a clear voice. When that condition had passed, the sick man sank into a state of serious weakness, and slept unceasingly. Once on waking up, he looked at his nurse, the sacristan's wife, and said softly : "What's the matter with me ? It must have been fever ; I've had a bad dream."

"Yes, sir," exclaimed the woman, "for a whole week you haven't known us !"

"God be praised, God be praised, now I can laugh. What do you think, Frau Gertrud, the whole parish gone over to Lutheranism ! Fancy dreaming that !"

She said nothing, and turned away. And when the priest observed that all sorts of changes had been made in the room, and that when the door opened there stood before it all kinds of people, not with their usual confidence, but embarrassed and shy, he shook his head a little and murmured : "It is so then. It is so then !" And his gloom returned.

And when he asked : "Who is walking up and down in the next room ?" the sacristan's wife lied, and told him it was the workmen.



But it was the pastor who was setting things in order.

While the old man had lain there, much had happened. The pastor had paid his visits of ceremony and entered into his sphere of activity. Nothing was changed in the church except the high altar. A Bible lay before the picture of the Cross, instead of the materials used in the Latin rites. Then there had been the day of taking the vow—the confirmation. The pastor spoke of the chief points of the Evangelical Church, of practical active Christianity in life, and of the mercy of God. He did not use the tone of a preacher, but spoke simply like one man to another. Then the congregation took the oath by the Cross and the Bible to remain true to the Gospel till death, and finally they sang: “Our God a tower of strength is He!”<sup>1</sup> The few who had remained true to the old faith, stood round the door and peeped in. A few old women complained aloud of the invasion of the anti-Christ; but with most of the people of the group curiosity was stronger than anger, and when they saw that there was room for all in the church, they went in, and joined in the singing. But they swore no oath, for they wished to die in their old faith.

One day the Captain invited the pastor, showed him his house, his works, the quarry and the quarrymen, the furnaces and the kilns. Then he went for a long walk with him over the heath, in order to show

<sup>1</sup> Luther's hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*.



him something of the peculiarities of the district. They came to the rocks and the pine trees; they came to isolated cottages and fenced in pastures; they came to rugged blocks of stone with nothing around them but quiet nature. On their return they saw how few were the wants of the peaceful solitary cottagers who worked in the miserable gardens and meadow paths they had contrived to make in sheltered places. They saw the contemplative life of the shepherds who pastured their sheep and goats on the scanty grass and heath. They saw one or two of the shy fellows who wandered about this tableland with scraper and sack in order to collect resin from the pines and berries from the junipers.

The Captain told the pastor of the bitter hardships the district had suffered. Once there had been such a severe winter that nearly all the cottages were buried under the snow, and the people had to creep in and out through the roof. Another time there was such a drought that the few meadows and shrubs were burnt up, and it was necessary to kill the sheep because the water in the springs hardly sufficed for human needs. Once there was such a storm that the shingle from the roofs, and the window-shutters of the houses in the village were carried far out into the stony desert, and every one who was out of doors had to lie flat on the ground lest he should be thrown down, when he must have rolled up against the mounds of grass. The sand beat like hail against the walls, the water over-



flowed the pools and rushed over the stones, and the image of St. Christopher came flying through the air from the upper end of the village. There had been fires and sickness; but as in times of prosperity the heath dwellers were guiltless of pride, so in times of distress they were never utterly despairing.

"It almost makes one afraid," said the pastor suddenly to his companion. "The people were like this then under their old belief. How will they be under the new?"

And the Captain replied: "Their old belief taught them renunciation, the new will teach them to struggle."

"No, sir, I do not wish to see this holy peace destroyed."

"I do not mean to struggle with each other, God forbid! I mean to struggle courageously against harsh nature. He who comes here in a hundred years—perhaps he'll find no heath, but fertile and cultivated land and shady forests."

These remarks had brought the two men into a serious mood. They thought of the soul torment that preceded change of faith, and which scarcely any of the heath dwellers had shown. They thought of the old priest, and carried on a long conversation. They did not return to "Christ Village," as the people called it, until evening. When they bade each other "good-night" the Captain said: "Then we'll do that. The congregation will agree."

"And God, too, will approve," said the pastor.



After many weeks, when the vegetation on the heath had already begun to turn yellow, the old priest had so far recovered that he could enjoy some of the gifts of the villagers. The greater part he gave to needy folk who could no longer get a living. It was a matter for wonder that he had "surprised" a few evangelicals with some of the good things.

The first time that he went out after his recovery he went to the church. But he stopped at the door and did not go in. He stood there shivering, and when some shepherds saw him from the street, they went up to him and informed him that they still adhered to the old faith. They were, of course, in a sad minority, but they would like to celebrate once more a holy mass on the heath. They came to beg it in the name of the Roman Catholic Christians of Christopher. They had already spoken to and gained the consent of the pastor and the Captain. The altar of the Virgin still had the catholic consecration, and the sacristan had made all the necessary preparations. The priest joyfully consented, thinking of nothing but the longing for the sacred mass, which he so fully shared with the few faithful ones. He praised God for the favour of being permitted to thank the Holy Virgin for his recovery to health.

And so on the day of Mary's nativity the priest entered the church that had become evangelical, with the chalice. When with slow steps he walked behind the ministrant with the bell, and turned round



the pillars into the aisle he saw what had been done. The altar of the Holy Virgin was adorned as for a festival. Heath evergreens were twined round the pillars, roses and flowers decorated the table, and numerous candles gave a charming evening light to the semi-darkness. The image of the Virgin was clothed in a white silk cloak, sprinkled with small gold stars, a wreath of real red roses surrounded the niche. The altar steps were covered with a red carpet, and the old man ascended, trembling with emotion. The church was full to overflowing. For not only the Roman Catholics had gathered round their old sanctuary, but also the Evangelicals, who had held their solemn festival of the Cross the day before, and had been edified by the noble words of the preacher. Many felt a homesickness when the bell rang, and the organ accompanied the canticle, "Here lies before Thy Majesty," when the cloud of sweet-smelling incense rose up to the picture above the altar, and when the white-haired priest softly spoke the *Oremus*. Isidor, the shepherd, leaned against the pillar and thought, who could reverence the white cloak of the Virgin, since he, following his evangelical conscience, had taken away her red one. He hid in the corner, not trusting himself to look the Virgin in the face.

When the priest left the sacristy after the mass and tottered down the steps, the pastor met him, offered his arm as a support, and invited him to breakfast in his room. He had waited for him, and as his



family had not yet come, he often felt very lonely at meals. And so he asked the priest to give him his company occasionally.

"Gladly, gladly," answered the old man, stopping to blow his nose. "It can't however give you much pleasure, I am not very sociable." To which the pastor returned: "With men who think alike it's pleasant merely to sit together." Men who think alike! Was it not true then that our ways were wide as the heavens apart? The priest may have thought it, but he said nothing. And because he did not want to seem unfriendly, he accepted the invitation.

They sat down to the table, the robust man, with the clever face, his beard cut like that of a professor, only a certain seriousness proclaiming the clergyman, and the frail old man with the stooping white head. The housekeeper was glad to have the two men together, as it lessened her work. She had brought the coffee, its odour enhanced by the morning air; she had put the flower-patterned butter-dish, the green glass honey-pot on the table, and the pastor held the cigar-box in readiness, as if the conversation would be prolonged. The priest would much rather have gone back to his own room, where there were certainly not such fine things, but neither was there a highly cultured man of the world who made him uncomfortable and afraid. Before sitting down he had spoken his thanks in an embarrassed, awkward fashion for the Samaritan's service rendered him by the pastor on the heath.



"Indeed," he added, "I fear it has only lengthened the inconvenience."

The pastor poured out his coffee. "Drink it while it's hot, sir ; it is late for breakfast."

"I'm used to that," answered the Roman Catholic priest, "thank you ! thank you !"

The pastor was silent, so that the old man should drink his coffee in peace. Then he said : "I wanted an opportunity of speaking to you, my dear neighbour. Forgive me for using so intimate an expression, I think we must become accustomed to each other. There will be no difficulty on my side."

The priest bowed, and his face grew crimson. He was almost ashamed of the politeness he was receiving.

The pastor continued : "I have a proposal to make to you, sir, and in the name of the congregation. They are not willing that a man of your years should make a change. It is not right. Give up the idea and stay with us on the heath. You and your heath dwellers have grown up together, you would find that out after the separation. No, I know what you will say. Protestant—Catholic ! Let us leave those words unsaid for the future—we are agreed about the Gospel."

When the pastor stopped speaking, the old man said : "That's so, that's so." Then he shook his head : "It would not be a good thing for me to stop here, it would not be a good thing, and besides the authorities would not allow it."



The pastor shrugged his shoulders slightly, as if his commission had miscarried.

Then he said calmly: "What if that portion of the inhabitants who have not come over to us, shall come and ask you? There are forty of them. I do not think that your Church will abandon these firm adherents. It is right that they should have their shepherd, and we shall not be jealous of one another. We can each hold our service at its proper time in one and the same church. The Chapel of the Virgin belongs to you."

The old man lifted up his arms as if to strike his hands together, but let them fall again on to the table.

"Sir, you are too good," he said very softly, "but it would scarcely answer."

"I'm sure it would," said the pastor. "And the Community of Christopher regards it as a pleasant duty to provide its beloved priest with a home free from care for the rest of his life. And on the other side, you yourself feel the necessity of rendering it possible for your faithful ones, to whom you so often preached the duty of taking the Sacrament, especially on their death-beds, to fulfil that duty! Are these poor people, many of whom are old and sick, to go to eternity without consolation and blessing?"

Then the priest began to laugh loudly. The pastor saw it was akin to weeping, a veritable heart-storm.



The old man, all of a tremble, felt for his hand. "I'll stay, I'll stay. My God, I never thought of such a thing. If they are only forty, and they desire grace—yes, yes. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

And so it came to pass that the old priest of Christopher on the Heath, who had lost the greater part of his congregation, did not leave the village.

Although dismissed by the authorities he did not seek to die in an asylum, but remained as independent priest to the few persons who were still true to him. And so it happened that two Christian beliefs were practised in the village Church of the Holy Heath, and one did not interfere with the other. The pastor, in his ample gown, held the Communion Service at the altar of the Cross and announced the Gospel from the pulpit.

In the aisle, in the Chapel of Our Lady, the white-haired priest celebrated in full the Roman Catholic Mass. The pulpit stood at his service; but preaching had never been his strong point, and he said that no one could offer anything better than the Gospel. So both communities heard in common the evangelical sermon. As regards the service, it came to pass that more worshippers were found in the Chapel of Our Lady than at the altar of the Cross. Many who strove to devote themselves with head, hand and work to the Protestant altar, had some trouble to



keep their hearts from wandering back to Mary and the saints, with whom their childhood and youth had been spent.

It happened farther that brides and bridegrooms asked for the wedding blessing of the white-haired priest, so that the contract might be quite sound. And when the priest sat in the confessional, which stood in a dark part of the building, numbers of Roman Catholic men and women came there, and now and then a shepherd or resin-gatherer, in order to relieve his heart. For the gentle admonitions and calm consolations of the Father Confessor are so comforting to men of the lower strata of society, who seldom hear a kind, true word. A Catholic Confessional and an Evangelical Communion—that would be scarcely possible anywhere—except on the Holy Heath.

Isidor, the old shepherd, went to confession. Not to repent his change of faith. No, it was another cause of solicitude that gave his conscience no peace. Once he went to confession in order to confess his misdeed, but when his turn came he slipped away. In the first place, he doubted whether he would receive absolution, and in the second no one should say that he was a Protestant in material life, but for his soul's need returned to the Catholic Church. No, no, you belong to the pastor! he told himself angrily. And once when the pastor stood in the garden, cutting the dead twigs off the hedge, old Isidor crept up to him softly, with an uncertain movement took off his



broad-brimmed hat, and asked politely if he might confess.

“The priest is in his room,” said the pastor.

“I am an Evangelical,” said the old fellow; “can’t one confess as a Protestant?”

The pastor looked at him more closely. “If I’m not mistaken, you’re Isidor, the shepherd. If you have anything on your mind, Isidor, I will gladly help you.”

After some beating about the bush, and spying round to see if there was anything like a confessional here, the shepherd confessed his crime. Once when there was an epidemic he had presented a red silk cloak to Our Lady in the Chapel for her intercession. Afterwards, when he changed his faith, he regarded the statue as an idol, and he had taken the cloak away again. When he came to consider, the cloak had been her property, since he had given it to her! So he had stolen it from the body, but could not return that cloak as he had burnt it on the heath. Therefore he had not a quiet moment. And what could he do to compensate for his sin?

When the pastor had heard this confession, he walked up and down the gravel path a few times with his arms folded, and thought: That’s how they are. Then he stopped in front of the shepherd and said: “Isidor! I hear that your sheep yield you good wool. My advice is have a warm winter cloak made out of the wool—not for Our Lady in the Chapel, she already



has what she wants, but for the old priest who likes to be warm. If you do that, the Virgin will not be angry with you."

The shepherd took the advice, and was then at peace.



## Chapter III

### CHRISTMASTIDE

#### I

**I**F the town dweller wants to learn something definite about holy days, he should inquire of the peasants. The town workman enjoys the holy day, [without bothering his head much about it. The peasant, who in other matters is not generally accustomed to grasp the reason and object of things, wants to know, however, why he is at rest, or goes to church or gets drunk on that day. He has a certain knowledge of the holy days, and he has his holiday temper.

I don't want to talk about myself, we say, when we begin to talk about ourselves. However, to speak about myself, I may say, I was a very radical patron as long as I had anything to do with peasant holidays. I considered the Church calendar and the individual festivals were all in the wrong order. I wanted the Church year to keep pace with the solar year, which is only right, if Heaven and the Saviour wish to harmonize. As, however, the sun will not make a concession, the Church should. She had, as I once read,



fixed her greatest festivals merely by caprice. If the sun, which on December 22 is already at its lowest point, begins to rise, we cannot have the beginning of Advent ; the least I should have liked to have had would have been Christmas on that day. In sequence all the festivals which have to do with the childhood of Jesus would have followed without any difficulty ; for example, the Circumcision, the sacrifice, the magi, the innocents, etc., so that we could have been comfortably finished with the Christmas holidays before Carnival. Then would follow the rest of the festivals, which would bring us to the end of June. The second half of the year could be dedicated to the saints' days, and there would be no necessity for any confusion. To make the calendar right, the simplest plan would be to drop the leap day for forty years ; thus, through the omission of ten leap days, the civil year would be ten days ahead, and would coincide with the solar year. I laid these proposals of reform before my good old confessor, the priest, John Plesch, of Kathrein, on the Hauenstein. He thought that knowing the Roman Catholic Church, and the scholars, they would not be willing to entertain such a change. The French, once upon a time during a great revolution, changed the Sundays and holidays by fire and sword ; but in the end, the Holy Church retained the mastery with its old customs ; therefore I ought, as a simple country fellow, to keep quiet on such matters.



Consequently I occupy myself to-day with things as they are, and not as they should be.

The first signs of Christmas begin to show themselves at St. Nicholas, and are at their height on St. Thomas's Eve. St. Thomas's Eve, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are the "nights of the asking Virgins." On St. Thomas's Eve they throw their shoes to the bedroom door. If the shoes remain lying with the toes pointing towards the room then next year the bridegroom will come along. If the toes point towards the door then he may come, but will go away again. On Christmas Eve the maidens carry an armful of planks from the wood shed to the house. If the planks are in pairs, it signifies an even number; that is to say, next year there will be a marriage. Last of all, on New Year's Eve at the pouring of lead, a little figure is to confirm their hopes.

There was a girl in Lochreithof who tested her fortune in this manner; the shoes were full of promise, the planks were promising and the lead gave hopes for the best. He came, she caressed him, but nothing more came of it. Now, one does not know whether the men or the customs are at fault.

The peasant also feels the holy shudder that goes through the world on Christmas Eve. He also grows enthusiastic, and it seems as if on this day the laws of nature are different. We are almost anxious about the world's balance, for suddenly all is joy, and charity is everywhere. Luckily the day is soon over, and on



the heels of the great Festival come St. Stephen and St. John. The former wants his share in the Christmas celebration as chief arch-martyr, the latter calls attention to his particular friendship with the Saviour. The former is important to the peasants by reason of his "Stephen" water; the latter knows how to make himself popular with his "St. John's" wine. All the same neither belong to the real Christmas group. The first real festival is Innocents' Day. It recalls to us in the sweet Christmas peace, the massacre of children by Herod. The people celebrated this anniversary by a whip, with which they whip one another out of bed on December 28 with the words "healthy and fresh."

After Innocents' Day there comes a St. Thomas, a born Londoner, a Bishop of Kandeberg, who was brave and independent enough to resist the civil laws of his country pluckily and without flinching, so that the Church canonized him. Our peasants call the man Thomas windfeast, and they say that if they do not work on this day they will be spared winds and storms in the coming year. This makes their fifth Christmas holiday.

Sixth in order comes one from the Old Testament, a celebrated poet, and player of the harp, King David. David has indeed a right to pay Christmas visits to the Child, that descended from his family of legends of the saints, and anti-Semitic calendars ignore him and patronize the holy widow Melania on this day. Pretty stories of this widow are to be found in the



peasants' collections of sermons. She was a rich Roman lady, who, out of love for God, ruled her husband until they both took vows, whereupon the husband soon died, and Melania devoted herself to Theology and employed her wonderful eloquence in combating errors. In comparison with such a lady the Jewish harpist would naturally take second place.

Last of all comes Sylvester. As is well known, he was a Roman pope. He had a hard fight with the Jews. I remember a little story about him. One day the Jews brought him a wild ox, and said the name of God is so great and awful that if they uttered it in the ear of the animal, it would fall down dead on the spot. The Pope tried the experiment, and as a matter of fact the ox fell dead at the mention of the name of the God of the Jews, whereupon Pope Sylvester said that if the name of your God is awful enough to kill an animal, the name of mine is powerful enough to bring it to life again. He spoke the word, and the animal came to life again.

However, Sylvester owes his great fame less to this resurrection than to the circumstance that he became guardian of the close of the year. He has enjoyed, however, that title only a short time relatively, for it was only in the year 1583, that is more than 300 years ago, the Gregorian calendar found its way into Roman Catholic Germany, and in this Sylvester occupies the position of closer of the doors, and as such enjoys many a good thing.



New Year's Day is the eighth in succession of the Christmas holidays. On this day the peasant adds the following sentence to the paternoster. I pray God for a Happy New Year and thank Him that "the past one has been so happy." The noisy martin of neider Lenten is so utterly contented that after having lost in one year a rich uncle, two wives and a mother-in-law, he does not alter a syllable of the prayer in the next New Year, thanking God that the past one has been so happy.

Now four working days come, which, because they belong to the Christmas period, enjoy an exceptional position. In these days no threshing or weaving is allowed. The evening of January 5 comports itself as if the high festivals were going to begin anew. As on Christmas and New Year's Eve, the peasants go with censor and sprinkling brush through the whole house. The only difference is that this time they make the following signs, C+, M+, B+. Anybody who is unable to write, here's a penman from somewhere who marks the magi for him.

I was once fetched for this business by our neighbour the old Reigelbergerin. There was in the house a piece of chalk about the size of a pea, hardly enough to hold between the fingers. I just managed, with great trouble, the C and the M, but then the chalk broke, rolled on the floor and disappeared. What was to be done? I drew the B with a piece of charcoal. The Reigelbergerin was frightened, for it was as a



protection against the "black man" that she had the holy signs made.

If you were good children, my dear readers, I would tell you many a pretty story of the magi. According to one interpretation the magi are said to be not only kings, but also wise men, but it was considered that the people would hold kings in golden splendour, in greater honour than mere wise men. The Prophet of Balaam said once upon a time, that a star would arise out of the kingdom of Jacob, which would presage a mighty king who would rule over both Jews and heathens. Whereupon the heathens placed watchers on a mountain, to watch for the star, and they watched for 1,500 years. One night when a hot wind blew from the desert, and the sea was roaring in the distance, they fell asleep. Whereupon the star arose; they told this to all lands, and in consequence the three wise men set out to seek the star.

It was a dark night, and the stars moved quickly above the earth, and the wise men followed the new unknown light for days and days. Other kings and lords, with large retinues, joined them, and they reached the city of Jerusalem. There they visited Herod and asked him about the great king, presaged by the star. The Jewish king treated his guests with great honour and ceremony, and answered that he himself was the great king—he knew of no other in the country. They were at liberty to seek, however; if they found one mightier than he, they were to let



him know, he would be the first to pay him homage. On they wandered ; the star shining in front of their eyes. At last it came to rest over a roof that sheltered the family of a travelling artisan. There they found a little child, with light-coloured truthful eyes, in great poverty, yet wanting for nothing. As the wise men were tired, and had no hope of finding him they sought, they gave their best gifts to the Child, but the poor people said : “ What do we want with your gold, your frankincense and your myrrh. The earth is our bed, and Heaven our protection. The Child who possesses so little that we were obliged to lay Him on straw in a manger, has not come to receive, He has come to give.”

Whereupon the kings whispered to one another, “ We have found Him at last. Let us tell it quickly to our Lord and Brother.” One of them, a man of swarthy complexion, was of opinion that Herod seemed hardly inclined to bow to another in his own country. It would be wiser not to tell him about the Child. Whereupon they returned by a different route to their own lands. All the same Herod had heard that among the little children of Bethlehem there was One who, according to the prophecy, would become the mightiest King of the Jews, and as he was not successful in finding the Child he ordered the murder of all boys in or round about Bethlehem.

Yes, I know you have heard the story all too often already, in a too pointed fashion, so that its divine



loveliness and rugged greatness no longer move you. Of the three real Christmas holy days, the Nativity, Circumcision and the appearance of the three wise men, it is the latter that contains the deepest meaning, the most incomprehensible miracles. Why did the mighty princes come and kneel to the poor child? Why! because they were wise men. And why did they depart, leaving the helpless creature of whom they had such great expectations? Why did they not take him with them to their palaces—why? Because they were wise men; they knew that no creature of God can develop in well-being and luxury; that poverty and loneliness and self-denial, and all the love and all the sorrow of the people are needed to make a hero and a redeemer of a man with great gifts.

If I were to stand once again on the threshing-floor and preach to the corn sheaves, as I did once upon a time between the ages of ten and fourteen, when I used to give Christmas sermons to the straw heads, till our servant Mark told me in confidence that I would make an excellent priest as domestic chaplain in a lunatic asylum—I say that if I were again to preach to heads of straw (and no man may know what will befall him), I would weave the story of the magi in a more subtle manner than I can do here.

On the second day after the three wise men comes the anniversary of St. Erhard, who is pictured in the Styrian Manuel Calendar with a bishop's stave and a wooden axe. The legend relates that the wooden axe



was the instrument of the martyrdom of the holy bishop. The peasant knows better, and tells that St. Erhard had the axe to chop away, once for all, the Christmas holidays after they had lasted, with but small intervals, for two full weeks. Another interpretation says that Erhard broke the frozen mill wheels with his axe and then went into the forest to chop firewood.

At last, working days come. In the Church, however, the Christmas feeling lasts till the Candlemas of Mary; and then out of doors the Carnival rages. Whoever does not work and pray may go and dance. The floors are polished, and Heaven shuts its eyes.

As I close these reflections, the heretodox and orthodox want to get hold of me in their desire to burn me. I escape their greedy claws like a butterfly. I love flowers. Sweet and peaceful Christmas, with its holy myths, is a flower in the midst of the winter of the year and of life; a flower which I pray may bloom on my breast when I marry and when I die. Indeed, can one of you orthodox or heterodox people think of anything more beautiful in heaven or earth than a young chaste mother and her child, than a child that will redeem the world with the living words, "Do good to those that hate thee and love thy neighbour as thyself"?

## II

A cold pale winter's night lies over the woodland landscape, the moon is in the heavens, the snow on



the fir trees does not sparkle, for moon and stars are veiled by a dull cloudy mist. In such a dusk the high ridges, valleys and gorges can only be dimly seen ; close at hand the black branches of the trees are more clearly defined. Farther on, the outlines of mountains and trees vanish from sight in the frosty air, or are veiled by the snow, which is beginning to fall.

Through the night there is a tremulous sound of bells coming from all sides, as if the snowflakes sounded in the air. It rises from the valleys where the villages and churches stand. They are the bells ringing for Holy Christmas.

What a wonderful sight is this day ! If two suns should appear in the heavens some day, it would not be a greater miracle than that which takes place on Christmas Day. It is a day when not one of all the selfish men thinks only of himself. Each thinks of the other. To surprise one another with joy, to overload one another with gifts are the objects of this day. It is cold winter, but nobody freezes, for hearts are warm. Work is done secretly night and day, nobody is tired, nobody is hungry, love of their fellow-men strengthens and satisfies all. It is as if the laws of nature were changed, and we almost fear for the balance of the world, since everything is so suddenly joyous. The almightiness of charity comes so suddenly. When I awake on the morning before Christmas and my eye falls on the Christmas tree, standing quietly in expectation of the hour of joy, on the white-



covered table, my eyes grow moist. Oh ! Christmas day that wakens the hearts of men, and with the divine breath of May changes earth to heaven. My greeting to thee, my greeting to thee, thou divine, thou incomprehensible Christmas.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day ! We have here two days in the year in which love prevails. That love which our Saviour revealed almost 2,000 years ago. If in every thousand years, only one day of unselfish love were added to the year, we should need only 363,000 years more till the earth, assuming it lasts as long, becomes a Kingdom of Heaven.

Again, if some people would do for this world and its inhabitants that which they do for Heaven without benefiting their fellow in the least, we should arrive considerably sooner at the much desired Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

You know the story of how poor Gregory went out into the wood to fetch a small Christmas tree for his dear children, and how the keeper caught and arrested him as a thief and poacher. The civil code says the keeper did right. I look with suspicion on him who always keeps to the civil code and nothing else. We carry a different code in our hearts. When long ago, as a young man, innocent and inexperienced, I left my house in the woods to go among strangers, my mother took me by the hand and said : " Peter, should it happen that you wish to do something to somebody else, and do not know whether it is right or wrong,



shut your eyes, say a Paternoster, and imagine yourself in the other person's place." Here you have the Catechism and civil code put together in a few words.

Do the Christmas bells never find harmony in our souls? To-day the wild joy of giving, to-morrow again the usual lack of love. Would not, then, fidelity and hearty loyalty of man to man be a matter of course in this world where the elements have numberless weapons ready to fight against us? In truth, it is not wise to make enemies of our brothers and to chase after empty phantoms, to wound one another's hearts in the short time we can look on the light of day before the grave. The candles of the Christmas tree burn just as earnestly, solemnly and peacefully as they will in the time to come beside the bier.



## Chapter IV

### EASTER

THERE was a squire in Brockendorf to whom, as was the custom of bygone days, many of the peasants owed tribute. The squire lived, however, in a large town most of the year, enjoying all kinds of pleasure and only remembering his dependents when he needed money, and indeed, his lordship needed a great deal. At home his agent squeezed, pinched, and sweated as long as possible, but after a while, more being unobtainable, the squire thought the time had come to look into his affairs at Brockendorf personally, and to impress on his agent the need of a stricter fulfilment of his duty. This duty, however, consisted solely of bleeding the peasants. The master arrived late one evening in spring, driving his fast horses through the valley. He noticed, to his pleasant astonishment, that his arrival was already known, although it had not been announced beforehand. Bonfires had been lit on all the hills, and cannon were being fired; the people were still up, and in a state of excitement. The whole valley was in a festive mood. The squire was moved to the very heart, for he still had softer feelings.



As he drove into the courtyard of the castle and caught sight of his agent, he sprang quickly from the carriage and pressed his hand. "I am very pleased. Give the people my thanks and tell them I will not forget them. Be indulgent, should these brave peasants not always be able to discharge their debts." When the agent discovered that the festivities were the cause of his employer's delight, he first thought of telling him their real cause, but did not do so, and left the squire in the belief that the bonfires and cannon firing were in his honour. It happened, however, to be Easter Eve, and the bonfires were lit and the cannon fired in honour of the Resurrection of our Lord. The squire kept his word, the peasants paid no tribute that year, and were benefited by it. The squire had no money to spend in the great city, and was obliged to remain in his country estate, which benefited him also.

I am reminded of this squire by those people who constantly assert in newspaper articles, in Easter poems and sermons, that Easter is the festival of approaching spring, of awakening nature. According to this interpretation Easter should be the common festival for all creation. How comes it, then, that lambs, calves and poultry are killed in order to make Easter dishes, instead of allowing them to enjoy the re-awakening of nature, according to the common right?

I am in favour of leaving the material and natural



side of Easter more to animals who are said to live their life and enjoy their heaven in their own fashion. Man, however, wants to have something out of the ordinary. He has ideas, wishes, longings which probably are, and always have been, unknown to animals. Our civilization is called Christian, and on Sundays it almost appears to me as such. Even if here and there there is one on the census list who is not entered as a Christian, that is no misfortune and no reason for hostility. During the week Christian, Jew, heathen and atheist are scarcely to be distinguished from one another. He, however, who is a Christian, not solely according to his baptismal certificate, has his particular Christmas and Easter. He thinks at Eastertide less of the fields that are turning green, and less of the Easter rabbit, than of the Redemption by our Saviour. He thinks of His and our Resurrection, and for that reason he lights bonfires and fires his powder, and if, in consequence, the approaching spring, like our squire, feels flattered and promises rich gifts, we are thoroughly in agreement.

I am almost of the opinion, however, that the following of a Christian interpreter of Easter is not quite as big as that of a Christian Christmas enthusiast. Why is it that Christmas is nearer our hearts? Whoever finds delight in the poor abandoned Christ Child should be able to find still greater delight in the Victorious Saviour; not by His coming, but by



His going. Our Lord redeemed us. He delivered us, not when He received gifts from the wise men and shepherds, but when He gave His life for us. Christmas teaches us to give lovingly in a charitable, cheerful manner, which is as beneficial to the giver as to the receiver. Easter, on the other hand, teaches us the lesson of divine heroism, of sacrificing oneself for one's fellow-men, and even, if it be necessary, giving up one's life for others. In truth this is less pleasant than the genial Christmas spent amidst domestic happiness, but it is more glorious. Resurrection and Eternal Life, not death, are to be found in dying for the world and its greatness. I am convinced that the hero who dies for others lives on with a feeling of bliss in the great soul of mankind, which in spite of all hindrances and stumbling-blocks, rises gradually heavenwards in the course of centuries.

Among mankind there are heroes of whom nothing is known. In the dark beginnings of the people there was no chronicler, no poet, and no painter to commemorate the bravery and goodness, the loyalty, self-denial and Christian endurance which permeated poor, lowly, every-day mankind. Nothing can become divine on earth, except a strong, loving, ready, self-sacrificing heart among mankind. This alone can give that which makes Easter the festival of the Resurrection, and the approaching spring is just good enough to ornament such an Easter with its young branches.

Now, as an Easter greeting, I will tell the story of a



man who was resurrected, and who lives still in song and poetry, and in the hearts of the people.

It is already 200 years since that man of Waldbachtal died. The house that he built has long rotted, the field he ploughed has become a wilderness again, but what of his body? It is not on earth nor under the earth. It is nowhere now; but his memory lives still. What was this man of 200 years ago, and what did he do?

He was in a low station of life, but he did much.

About the time of the last Turkish incursions Waldbachtal was inhabited by woodcutters, shepherds, and small peasants. The most curious among them was Antony Hirthauser, commonly called the Waldbachtal peasant. In his youth he had been a carter and had seen much of the world. He was the only one in that part of the country who could write his name. At forty years old he had a house by the riverside, with a wife and child. In the course of the year he journeyed several times to Breitenwang, where he bought from the grocer and shop people ribbons, leather, nails, salt and other articles, with which at home he did a small but honest trade. For this journey a pony was of no use, because there were no roads through the gorges, only a rough footpath studded with stones and tree roots.

Thus it came about that Antony Hirthauser went to Breitenwang on that Good Friday. His wife did not want to let him go, for those were disturbed times.



From Hungary the Turk, as well as the hostile Magyar, were on the march, and all kinds of vagrants were at large raiding the neighbourhood. Hirthauser, however, quitted his wife, saying that nothing would happen to him. Should he meet them, he knew how to deal with strangers; for emergencies he carried an axe with him. They were to keep the door carefully closed at home; to-morrow he would be back early with the goods he needed for Easter. He must also be present on Good Friday on the top of the great Hochschlag Knechthut at the meeting of the men who held council as to the steps to be taken to arm, and to guard against the enemy who were again threatening them. Then he went away, and arrived toward evening at Breitenwang, and made purchases and secured quarters for the night in the large inn of the place. After he had consumed a piece of bread and a pitcher of water as his Good Friday repast, he retired to the small chamber that had been assigned him, where he soon fell asleep.

About midnight noise and riot occurred. At the lower end of the place a fire was in full blaze. The alleys were crowded with strange forms on foot, on horseback, and in carriages. Dark men, armed to the teeth, thronged in the houses in order to gain possession of them. The enemy was in their midst. Our Waldbauer, seizing his axe, wanted to join in the fray in the street; but it was too late. They were pouring in already through the gate, and he had scarcely



time to fly to his chamber for refuge. Through a crack in the door he could look into the large adjoining room, where what corresponded to the general staff of the enemy had pitched their quarters. There were eight or ten of them, men with prominent cheek bones, bent swords, half in oriental garb, with long feathers in their turbans and heavy pistols at their belts. They sat on tables and on the floor with their legs folded under them, and were eating raw meat, which they tore with their teeth, making loud noises, and laughing like the neighing of horses. The room was lit red by the smoking splinters. Gradually it became quieter; and they seemed to be holding a council of war, several languages being intermingled, amongst others broken German. The man from Waldbachthal thus overheard them agree to push on into the mountains early next morning and to attack a hut in the wood where the forces of the district would be assembled. By treachery they seemed to have found out everything. From the ambush of a gorge they planned to surround the hut with a superior force, put fire to it, and massacre the men inside; but it seemed as if the guides who were going to lead them had escaped.

Hirthauser had heard enough. He thought of pushing in hot haste through the night to Waldbachthal, to the Hochschlag Knechtstut, in order to warn the men of their danger. But while trying to leave the inn by the gate, he was pushed back by the sentries



with the butt ends of their muskets. Two men in red trousers seized him and dragged him back to the staff in the large room. At first the yelling crew wanted to string him up over the open hearth, but a man with a Magyar beard curled in a martial fashion, who spoke a mixture of Turkish, Hungarian, and German, prevented it. Judging by the pointed Alpine hat of the peasant that he came from the mountains, the Magyar of the beard asked the prisoner in broken German whether he knew the large hut that stood in the wilderness, Hochschlag Knechtut by name. Yes, he knew it, Hirthauser conceded. "Then," replied the other, "he could save his head and earn a bag of coppers. He was to accompany them and show them the way to that hut. "I will do that gladly," answered Hirthauser. As he spoke his eyes are said to have gleamed mightily.

In the morning at first cock-crow they started for Waldbachtal, the peasant not going along the quick road as he had thought to, with baskets filled with goods, but at the head of a large troop of curious beings, Hungarian and Slav mercenaries, Turkish Janissaries, gypsies, and other vagrants in rags, or clothed in what they had lighted upon by chance, and armed with all kinds of weapons. Some had been on horseback, and had to remain behind ; the great mass streamed along the banks of the river over the slopes and rotten stiles, and conversed in low tones as all noise was prohibited. Hirthauser had to go on in



front as guide, two bony Janissaries leading him with ropes, so that he might not escape.

After about two hours, they came to the wall of rock that stands out prominently in the wood, and behind which two streams meet. The one on the right comes from Waldbachtal, that on the left from the narrow gorges of Schattwande. Turning to the left, Hirthauser cast a hasty look through the dark fir-tops towards Waldbachtal standing in the morning light. A sorrowful look, for well he knew that it was farewell.

The waters came rushing from Schattwande, wild and greyish, foaming and raging between the slabs of rocks. On the banks the grass was turning green and the primroses were growing on the overhanging mountains. It was spring. Over the dark tree-tops the rocky walls were alight with the golden morning sun. On the stones lay masses of snow which at that time of year are wont to descend rapidly. Easter Saturday. Hirthauser thought of the peace at the grave of our Lord.

The path was becoming worse and the gorge wilder, and the horde angrier and more impatient. The crooked swords, hatchets, axes, short swords and long muskets rattled against one another, and weird curses increased at every step. The Magyar with pointed beard approached Hirthauser, and seizing him by the shoulder asked, "Whither away, you dog?"

"To Hochschlag Knechthut, General."



"Woe betide you if you show us the wrong way," the other answered, gnashing his teeth, and made at the same time a menacing gesture towards the knife at his belt.

"I know the way," the man from Walbachthal answered, as they stumbled on through haunts of game. Hirthauser reckoned how many hours he would have to lead the enemy astray, until the men in the large hut had dispersed, or could have armed.

"It is not easy to get at Hochschlag Knechthut," said he to the man with the pointed beard. "Do you see it there between the walls." Two chamois paths lead up to it. The Knechthut stands at the back on the meadow. In three hours we can be there."

"Get on, Swabian."

"You are leading me with ropes," replied Hirthauser; "if you do not trust me, why do you follow me."

The other felt for his knife again just as if he would say, "This is our security; beware lest you betray us."

The extraordinary procession marched up the mountain amidst the rivulets flowing between the masses of rocks, and over trees that, felled by the wind, had become interlaced. The clumsy way in which these foreigners climbed showed that none of them had ever set foot in Alpine parts before. Only a couple of beardless yellow-faced sons of the Caucasus ran on with the agility of cats. Hirthauser bent down to drink at a spring which came from a mossy rock. His



mouth was parched, and his heart infinitely sad. Only last summer he had brought his six year old little son to this wilderness to see the chamois, and they had rested beside this spring. Thunder rolled from over the gorges, so that the earth quaked, and the dust rose from an avalanche. The guide was violently pulled by the ropes so that he should lead them away from this region of destruction. The slopes went steeply upwards and the water trickled down over the pale turf from the masses of snow which lay high up on the summit. A warm soft air came from the mountains in the mid-day heat. From the brown Schattwänder, the pointed peaks of which stretched towards the heavens, large grey birds came flying and circling round, with their wings stiffly outstretched, their snorting forms hungry for prey. The troop of fighters got absolutely out of hand. Some stumbled and rolled down the hill, others fell deep in the snow, and others again lay exhausted on the stones. High up a dark cloud appeared, a whistling, and a roar ; and the giant avalanche slid downwards towards the abyss. Part of the enemy were buried beneath it, the rest, who had only been thrown to the ground, recovered their courage. Many of them fell on Hirthauser, accusing him of having led them to destruction. Whereupon the Waldbach peasant is said to have shrugged his shoulders and not spoken a word again. Then they raised a terrible uproar, and in hollow, angry tones, in many tongues or with shrill



screams, with weeping and cursing, they demanded the death of the traitor. No trial, no sentence. Without further ado they dragged the man up on to the rocky ridge and hurled him over the precipice. In falling, so the story is told, Hirthauser stretched out his arms in the direction of Waldbachtal and gave vent to a joyous cry. Later on the man with the pointed beard, who had remained behind buried in the snow, came up to them. What had happened was not to his liking. He climbed round the rocks, clambered down to the spot where Hirthauser lay on some flat stones, smashed to atoms. "A Magyar keeps his word," said he, gnashing his teeth, and drove his knife through the breast of the corpse.

With great difficulty and the loss of many a life, the foreign horde is said to have descended and found its way out of the stony desert. They troubled themselves not at all about their dead comrades, nor had they any further desire to seek Hochschlag-Knecht. They disappeared from the district, and the inhabitants of Waldbachtal were spared the invasion.

A song is still sung in Waldbachtal of which the last verse runs :

The Saviour He lay  
All on a cold stone,  
Down the angels came,  
: And to Heaven they bore Him.

So the hero still lives in the hearts of the people,



where his memory has kindled many a joyful sacrifice,  
and will kindle many another. May we not say then  
of this martyr : He is risen and walks beneath the palm-  
trees ?



## Chapter V

### WHITSUNTIDE

I AM a child of the world. Not one of those who have the world in its power, but one of those whom the world has in its power. Sometimes when a holy festival comes round, I take my soul from its prison-house, blow the dust from its feathers, set it on my outstretched hand, and try if it can fly away. Sometimes it flies as high as the tree-tops, circles round them once or twice, spies how much higher it is from there to Heaven, and then flutters downwards to the earth! Higher flights it cannot make, it is like a bird that has lived too long in a cage.

Fortunately, there is another bird that can soar infinitely higher, or infinitely lower, from the high Heavens down to the lowly earth. If he did not come to me, I could not go to him. A real vexation how our earthly plumage is always mud-encrusted, and how we are always homesick for the things below us, instead of for those above us. The scientists call it gravity, but it should more properly be called a "dragging down." And all at once we see a white bird fluttering in the blue sky, like a white flower-bloom—a dove.



The Holy Ghost has appeared to men in two forms—as a dove and as a flame : as a symbol of purity and as a symbol of glowing inspiration. One evening the Virgin was in her bedchamber. An angel came to her and a dove. One day the Son of Man knelt by the river, and the Herald in the wilderness poured water on His head and a dove circled in the bright light of the sky. One day, after their Master had vanished, and the bereaved disciples were despairing, tongues of flame descended on their heads from Heaven. Since poor sensuous beings think and live only through their senses, something visible must interpose. God the Father is an honourable old man with a white beard, God the Son a handsome youth with the Cross ; those figures should remain in the form most familiar to us—the human form. The Holy Ghost should represent the invisibility of God, and that is a more difficult task. It has been enveloped in fleeting forms, in the swift bird, in the flashing flame. And most men have received only the form and not the spirit. Moreover, the Holy Ghost has never been quite as popular as the Father and Son. Churches and chapels of the Holy Ghost are found in the land. On Whitsunday we look up to the ceiling of the church and see how through a hole the wooden dove with outspread wings is let down by a cord. The dove appears in a wreath of artificial roses in the form of a cross, and in the form of a disc it hangs in the church until late in the autumn. I have



heard that in some districts it is the custom on Whitsunday to take a live dove to Church and let it fly during the service. People often hang one, cut or folded in paper, over the table in their homes ; but if it is like anything geological at all, it rather resembles a giant butterfly than a bird. Very little can be done to make the invisible visible, or with a guide who is to be followed without being seen. The belief of people of the lower classes is often more material than sceptical, they believe only what they see. They are unable to believe in the spirit and in the truth, and so the Church has to meet them with visible tokens.

The tongue of flame is much less popular than the dove. But perhaps a sort of symbol of the Holy Ghost is to be seen in the flame of the Whitsuntide candle. But it is not apparent. The flame is more apt to remind people of the poor souls in Hell. And if a man burnt his finger, he would be likely to say : " Whew ! the fire is hot. How much hotter it must be in hell." It is much easier for the flame to remind them of Hell than of Heaven.

The country people appeal to the Holy Ghost to strengthen their belief, their grasp of things, and their memory ; school-children, therefore, specially pray to it. " The Holy Ghost can make people clever ! " they say, thinking less of ethical wisdom than of a more useful cleverness. Many pray to the Holy Ghost before undertaking some work or concluding some business, and it has sometimes happened that the



help of the Holy Ghost is invoked to overreach the other side.

I dare not dispute that the Holy Ghost can, on occasion, become visible to men, more especially as it once appeared to me, but not as a dove or a flame, but as an old grimy charcoal-burner. It was at a time when certain people began to insult me for my views, to scoff at and to slander me. I did not consider that it was the world's custom and I was mortally unhappy. Bewildered and forlorn, I wandered about the neighbourhood and suffered indescribably. It seemed to me that I was abandoned by everything. Then I remembered a saying of my mother's: If you are in difficulties and you can get no comfort from the world, pray to the Holy Ghost. I did so, but it availed nothing, and my wrongs burnt like hell-fire in my heart. Then one day I met Hiesel, the old charcoal-burner in the wood. I had known him from my childhood, and liked him very much, he was so simple-minded, and at the same time so wise.

"Now then, Master Peter," he began to address me, "what the matter that we look so sad? Is it all true then? Nobody believes what you tell them?"

So I saw that he knew all.

"My dear Matthias," I answered, "when they make a man out to be so bad . . ." I could not say any more.



Then he drew nearer to me. "If my hands weren't so black," he said, and held them away from me. "But I shall wash on Saturday, and then I shall be white again. They have made you black, but you needn't wash, you are still white. See, you mustn't be so sad. They can do no good and no ill with their talking. To do right in the eyes of the people you must put out of your head, but to do what seems to you right will give you peace. Otherwise you'll have none all your days. Be glad that you suffer innocently and not guiltily. And you must be weak. See what our Master had to go through. And do not hate your enemies so much. To-day they are and to-morrow they are not. Go your ways in peace, and if you meet an enemy and wish to inflict an injury on him, inflict on him some good deed, then he will be ashamed and you can laugh. Good-bye, good-bye! No offence, Master Peter!"

Then he hurried off up the shady forest path. I felt like shouting for joy, my heart was so light and glad, and it occurred to me: that was a Visitation of the Holy Ghost.

When I went home in the evening children were playing by the village brook, and one, a little four-year old boy, sat in the middle of the rickety wooden bridge and swung to and fro. I knew the boy, he belonged to a friend of mine. My most fervent wish was: If only he would fall into the water! God, if only he would fall into the water, so that I could



pull him out and show his father that token of my Christian love. But the child did not fall into the water. The Holy Ghost from the charcoal-burner's hut would have said : Ho ! ho ! Master Peter, your Christian will is not much use if it needs so much water to work it." But it often happens that vanity and hope of reward ruins the best resolutions ; if the Holy Ghost lets men out of its sight for a single moment——splash.

Only those who already have it truly and sincerely seek the Holy Ghost. The old weaver Sebastl ! Who in the district still remembers the busy little man with the big hump ! The old man was so bent that the upper part of his body was almost horizontal, so that—when he was not sitting on his weaver's stool—he always ran very fast, and got out of breath, and wiped the perspiration from his face with a piece of blue sacking. He was very industrious, had constant work, and yet brought home so little money that his family were almost starving. He spent nothing on himself, had even given up his snuff and his glass of wine on Sundays. The Chapel of the Holy Ghost stood on the outskirts, and Sebastl often knelt on the stone step in front of the entrance gate and prayed fervently. The innkeeper, passing by one day, said to him : " Now, master Weaver, do you want to become cleverer than you are already, that you pray so much to the Holy Ghost ? "

Sebastl had finished his prayer. So he got up,



wiped the dust from his knees with the flat of his hand, put his cap on his neck (it would not have remained on his head) and answered the innkeeper :  
“Certainly I must pray to become cleverer and with God’s help to rid myself of my burden.”

“What burden have you beside your hump ?” asked the jolly landlord.

“Oh, burden enough ! While wife and children live in misery and want at home, I come here and fritter away all my hard-earned gains.”

“Fritter them away ! How do you manage that ? It’s over a year now since you bought a single pint of wine from me.”

“Ah no ! not on myself, not on myself,” replied the weaver. “I do not spend it on myself. But I am so weak, so very weak. If I meet poor folk, my God ! there’s enough for them, sick men, half-naked children with want staring out of their eyes. That affects me deeply, and I must loosen my purse-strings. I pity them so much. And meanwhile my own family starves. I have just prayed to the Holy Ghost to harden my heart, but I can’t stop it, and I allow the first blind beggar I meet in the street to plunder my bag !”

The innkeeper remembered this and often told it me afterwards. The poor good weaver, in whose nature it lay to practise love of his neighbour so literally prayed to the Holy Ghost for hardness of heart. The Holy Ghost had long set up its dwelling in his



heart and was not to be ousted so easily. The devil cannot be driven out through Beelzebub, and much less can the Holy Ghost be driven out by calling on the Holy Ghost. I do not know how things progressed with the poor weaver's family, but I can scarcely believe they came to ruin. Had Sebastl gambled and drunk away the money which he gave to the poor, then, probably, his family would have come to ruin. God sometimes lets His children starve a little, but never perish. *Fin de siècle*, you smile in a superior way. Could you manage things better ?

In the meantime the Holy Ghost has flown to a warmer climate. The modern man can no longer be tender-hearted or capable of enthusiasm. He is always excited and never aglow. He has always ideas and never ideals. The dove has flown away, the flame is smoky. What now stands for an ideal is merely interest in some material good, or in some solid worldly advantage. That would not be so bad if anything good came of it. There is a great deal of misunderstanding in the world, but nothing is so grossly misunderstood as the Divine Spirit. Of the dove they have only the cooing, and they fire off cannon with the flame. Then when Whitsunday comes we remember higher things, and celebrate the Holy Ghost by a good dinner. And that the sin may taste better, people listen to me, the preacher of penitence, at Whitsuntide. That is Ash Wednesday salt fish after the Carnival banquet. And that the preacher of repent-



ance may not be too ridiculous he shall tell you something amusing.

It is said that at Whitsuntide, in Upper Styria, the witches go round the pastures and milk the cows' udders. Once Franz went out with his gun and saw a dark form squatting under a cow. Franz shouldered his gun and fired. The cow fell, the dark form continued squatting there, and was a small juniper-bush. From that day they called Franz the witch-hunter. He put up with the scoffing, but was always terribly sorry for the cow; the poor animal, said the scoffers, died of a sudden attack of rheumatism.<sup>1</sup>

Quite another kind of witch-hunter was Kilian, the woodman of Gossenbach. The women-folk in the district were agreed that there had not been so handsome a man since Adam. They could only have seen Adam in pictures, and how the national costume of Paradise could be compared with that of the Styrian hunter can only be discovered by consulting the beauties of Gossenbach.

Among the beauties was one who thought very little of Kilian. She did not speak of him, she did not look at him if they chanced to meet—nay, she candidly confessed that such meetings were distasteful to her. When the woodman learnt that Magerl was so bitterly

<sup>1</sup> The author uses here an obsolete German word, *Hexenschuss*. Literally translated, it would be "witch's shot," but it represented the idiom used in the text of the English translation.



hostile to him he naturally began to hate her. And the hatred grew greater from day to day. The lad could neither eat nor sleep for sheer hate of Magerl, and if he shot at a hawk, he hit a cock. Now he knew what it was: he was bewitched. Magerl had done him the mischief, the young witch. He only waited an opportunity to be revenged on her. The opportunity came at Whitsuntide. It was the custom in that neighbourhood for a lad on whom a girl had looked with disfavour or whom they wished to scorn, to hang a scarecrow made of straw and rags before their window. When Magerl opened her lovely eyes, and thought, "To-day is Whitsunday, I must see what sort of weather it is," she saw a hideously ugly creature hanging from a cherry tree opposite her window. At first she thought it was one of those whom she had bantered. But when she saw it was intended as an everlasting insult to her, she gave a wild cry as though some one had stabbed her in the breast. Then she began to weep in a heart-broken manner. The woodman, who lay hidden beneath the window, heard the weeping, and he was overcome and undone. He was one of those who could see no woman weep, and least of all a girl whom he had hated so deeply. He had only meant to tease her a little with the old joke, and now pity taught him that this mutual, fearful hate—was fearful love! And that same Whitsuntide morning they came to an understanding—proper and lasting.

I have always maintained that the principal char-



acteristic of true love is pity : the senses put the wheel together, pity puts on the tire.

Our soul, in its Whitsun joy, flies upward to Heaven to seek love. But intoxicated with earthly pleasures it is soon dragged back into the dust, and in the dust is found pity—the most suitable gift of the Holy Ghost for us children of suffering.



## Chapter VI

### SUNDAY

**T**HE law has decreed that henceforward the people are to have more complete rest on Sundays, and that employers will no longer be allowed to make what use they please of their workpeople on Sundays.

That is as it should be. The unceasing chase after money, and for money and on account of money, has long filled me with horror. Man does not live by bread alone, and so much the less when he does not often have time to eat it. So God be praised we have Sunday again.

But another anxiety assails me, We have Sunday but we have no soul for it. Since we toil six days a week for our material life, the religious temperament is obscured. Other things, too, both worldly and spiritual, have caused our love for and susceptibility to worship to become weak, and now—what are we to do with Sunday if we have no soul for it?

Formerly it was desired : Give the soul a Sunday !  
To-day we cry : Give Sunday a soul !

Sunday must possess the spirit of the sun, otherwise I prefer a working day. The working day has a



soul, even if it's a very worldly one ; but a worldly one is better than none. *The day of rest !* That is too little. To eat, drink, lie down and stretch the limbs, that is no Sunday to my mind. That everything earned during the week shall find its way down the throat with shouting, swaggering, gambling, brawling—for all crime springs from sensuality—that is no Sunday to my mind. I once said quite plainly that I prefer a man who works ten times to one who idles.

And yet I welcome you, oh law of Sunday rest, and only say to you : you make far too many exceptions. You close the big front door, but you open or leave open many back doors, through which people can slip into the workshop or the market or the street. It is all right, but there must be no compulsion ; my mother often said, you cannot force people to love, or to go to Heaven. I know that the devil stands ready with the policeman to drive us to church on Sundays with their weapons ; but our clergy must learn to protect religion from such a disgrace. Now I am clear : I want a Sunday, on which every man shall, of his own free will, lay aside his daily work, and turn to recreation and a nobler spiritual life.

But the spirit of the age ! Since you have given the workman a Sunday, you must also give him a belief. You must help him to have a moral outlook, belief in the good, the beautiful and the everlasting must help him to raise himself ; then he can use the Sunday. Give him as much knowledge as you please, only do



not imagine that knowledge can be a substitute for faith.

It is, however, very difficult to give any one a faith, it comes to a man through his bringing up in childhood, through his own being ; he is convinced and is familiar with the experience, and whether he will or will not, he is there or he is not there. Faith is the knowledge of the heart. For him who has it, faith is of practical value, like youth or health or any intellectual talent ; for it makes him morally strong, and renders the world beautiful for him. He who cannot dispute it must also admit that to take a man's faith from him is the same as injuring his health, as taking away the support and tools with which he maintains himself and might have influenced his fellow-men for good. Take away the crutches from a partially lame man because "walking without crutches is more dignified" you do him no good, for without the crutches he falls down.

Many forms of religious worship have terrible excrescences and parasites, and it is difficult for those who recognize them to have sufficient self-denial not to desire to knock them off with a club made from God's tree of religion. But that is dangerous. Faith is not a tree in a cultivated garden, but a tree in the wilderness. Faith is a tree which with illiterate folk does not grow straight up to Heaven, but more often rather creeps along the ground. The more it is freed from the material and spiritualized, the more it loses



in glad power over the people. There is in human nature a far greater need for a religious belief than for an ordered state, or comprehension of the universe, or progress in technical knowledge. The desire for the beautiful even more than the desire for the good is a fruitful cause of the need for religion.

Faith does not give a man knowledge, but the enjoyment of an inward vision. And religious worship does not appeal to the intellect, but to the senses, and causes enjoyment. Belief is a life of the heart and not of the mind, and has the power of making men happy already on earth.

I mean here belief in a Personal God, in immortality ; but I mean also belief in nature, in mankind, in the victory of human good on earth, belief in progress, in art. I mean every belief which is strong, which guides and encourages and blesses activity, and influences the life of man. No belief as such is immoral, and no morality is without belief.

I say in this sense : you must leave men their belief. And to those who have lost it, you must give a substitute. Those whose souls are dead, cynics, those who are indifferent, cannot use Sunday, or they make an absurdity of it.

I do not turn to the priests when I say : the workmen have got Sunday, now give them belief in and a soul for Sunday. I do not turn to the priests, because what the priests can offer is only of value to those who—if we may say so—still possess a belief in



worship. He in whose heart this is no longer a living power causes the mass and doctrinal teaching to sink still lower ; he will feel scorn and disgust for it. This is a fact and nobody can help it. We can, if need be, force ourselves into a sort of belief in the Church, and be ecstatic over it ; but the inborn, childlike faith, that is the truth, never comes. It is at best a patchwork, a pitiable makeshift, and which neither makes a man happy within nor outwardly strong. When on a Sunday afternoon I see a peasant girl read in her prayer-book, I walk past cautiously, so as not to disturb her. Her prayers would probably not edify me, but they concern her and not me, and the fact that her hope is strengthened through prayer is worth something to her. And if a little old woman pours holy water over the graves of her dear ones in the cemetery, believing that she is thereby mitigating the torments of Purgatory, I recognize in this superstition a power which can still heart-ache. The little old woman can do good with it to her dear departed and at the same time to herself. Can I do this ?

Yet if the one belief is lost man is not therefore also lost ; another ideal can take the place of the old one. Many a man is religious without knowing it ; many a man swears, so to say, by God that he is an atheist.

To whom then must I turn with my request that a faith may be given to the workman and a soul to his Sunday ? I apply to the employers, to school-



masters, to popular unions, to men of letters, to artists : all of you and others who have power and opportunity and good will, give the milkman something for his Sunday, make his Sunday-rest an enjoyment in a higher sense, strengthen the life of his mind and of his heart, arouse his interest in and love for human ideals, and if you do those things you give him a belief.

There are many ways of attaining this. I point out one which has already been tried here and there. A rich manufacturer constructs a Sunday house for his workmen—he can call it a Casino if that will make them more willing to enter it—they may also use it in their leisure hours on a weekday. The house contains a reading-room, a larger one for games, music and lectures. They meet in this hall on a Sunday afternoon. Popular speakers, who understand how to treat interesting and taking subjects in an entertaining way, are got to come. The workman takes more interest, and understands more than is generally thought. Only the subject must be put before him accurately, clearly and simply. He is in no mood to be taught with pedagogic ponderousness and professorial dullness. He must be allowed to join in the discussion and to bring forward his opinion and experiences.

Here the Young Men's Roman Catholic Associations offer a model not to be despised. Only a little more room for free opinion. In Lower Austria there are Peasants' Unions. On Sunday, after evening service, the villagers meet in a house, give or listen to short



practical lectures, discuss what is going on in the world and political subjects, read aloud short stories and poems, relate amusing anecdotes, have music and singing, and at the same time—for those whose custom it is—drink their Sunday pint. Sometimes an entertaining guest comes from the neighbourhood, sometimes a wandering teacher; the priest and the schoolmaster are also of the number, and thus time passes in the most agreeable way. And one can mount even higher.

He who prefers the open air—so much the better, nature is a great teacher and educator of the human heart. It will not be much longer before the feeling for nature, the love of touring, will seize the mill-hand, buried in the dust of dark workshops, as they have seized the more educated classes—and it would be a good sign. It would not be so much conscious joy in mountain, forest and field, but rather instinct, which would at first drive him out into the free open air. Once outside, he would go again and again, would become familiar with natural objects, and would gradually come to comprehend their grandeur and their beneficent influence on mankind. Thus the workman would be on the road to a higher spiritual life.

Working people ought to obtain enlightenment according to their profession and according to the times—they have to co-operate in the great task of culture and civilization, and those who work must also be consulted—but one thing I must emphasize



again and again : the originally ideal power of faith, where it still exists, must not be sacrificed to enlightenment, even among these people. To be a good man, living in peace with himself and others ; to be a loyal father of a family, a respected citizen ; to work with love and skill, and so in his way to add to the usefulness of the whole—we ought not to ask more of any man.

What is the use of making of him a restless, brooding man of miscellaneous knowledge ?

For the winter Sundays in the towns I know something particularly delightful—cheap matinées in the theatres for the people. I already hear the outcry : That's it, to the theatre instead of to church, that's the new religion. Well, it's the new and also the old religion—grand examples in the Good and the Beautiful. Have you ever had anything better ? That only the great works of great poets should be represented goes without saying ; we have many that the people can understand and perhaps enjoy with more devotion and deeper receptivity than the blasé cavalier. What is sometimes too good for the latter is perhaps good enough for the people. One of our most esteemed actors had once the idea of giving free readings for the poor people in the Knights' Hall at Graz on Sundays, both serious and humorous pieces of a good kind. I intended once to get up such readings in Graz. They laughed in our faces, saying the mill-hands preferred sitting in the taverns with their



sweethearts to sitting in lecture-halls; they did not want to be entertained by educated men, they could entertain themselves. The tavern is the accursed cancer which makes it doubtful if Sunday rest will not do more harm than good. Government! why do you tolerate this unrestrained tavern life? Why do you forbid apothecaries to sell poisons to indiscriminate buyers and yet leave those homes of poison—the taverns—open? You decree Sunday rest: is its holy spirit to be alcohol?



## Chapter VII

### CHURCH MUSIC IN THE VILLAGE

SOME time ago, during a summer trip through western Styria I assisted at the Sunday service in a village church. In great noisy town churches God is not always to be spoken to when I feel the desire to approach Him. But in peaceful village churches, among a devout congregation and moving singing, the Lord sometimes descends to me. This time it was otherwise. It may be that my soul was not prepared; the church was decidedly not. Rubbish lay in the corners of the rotten wooden floor. The altars and pictures were covered with dust, which rose to one's nose instead of incense. Faded and crushed paper-flowers were carelessly tied to the candlesticks, the candles were put in crookedly. The untidily spread altar-cloth was stained and dirty. The curtains of the fine Gothic windows were partly in holes and rolled up awry, so that they covered the walls sideways and let in the bright sun through the windows, which almost brutally clashed with the dim religious light.

The dais before the altar was crooked so that the tabernacle was entirely concealed from a great part



of the people on the benches. A torn piece of one of the numerous but badly placed banners hung into the font so that it was wet; in short, it was slovenly management. Was the priest or the vergers responsible? The parish is poor: that is no excuse. There should at least be the ornaments of poverty: cleanliness and order. In the sermon the priest spoke of the blessings of cleanliness and order, but in such a general way that the vergers, who during the sermon was occupied with the rusty censer was certainly the last to take the hint. Perhaps the priest did not like to be more pointed, for the vergers is a pompous fellow and quite capable of throwing his ill-paid office at the priest's head.

What the vergers did badly the leader of the choir tried to make good. He was the schoolmaster and burdened with musical talent. For musical talent, practised when the means are lacking, becomes a veritable source of general danger. He uses unheard of means to satisfy his desire.

The good intentions of the choirmaster of the church in respect to a mass of Haydn were touching. That is classical music such as the cathedrals have none better on Easter Sunday. But, great God, how the mass was performed by the village choir! The orchestra consisted of the organ, two shrill wind instruments, a whining clarinet, a noisy drum and a fiddle which caused my nerves the tortures of hell. A thick-necked peasant boy and an elderly prima donna from the cowshed sang the Latin text—it was dreadful. God



doubtless pardoned them, He must be accustomed to these good people and bad musicians. But poor me, with my mortal ears ! Yet I managed to hold out to the end, trying with gentle persuasion to explain to the saints that this cat's music was really meant for the most beautiful, most elevating work of art. Probably the devout congregation were edified, for not one of them looked pained, except a little old man who twisted his wrinkled face a little at the shrillest sounds of the trumpets, and at the worst screeching of the fiddle. When at last the glory of the instrumental part of the mass was over, and only the organ sounded softly, it was like balm to my wounds. But at the conclusion, when at the Holy, holy, holy, of the last Benediction, nobody expected there was anything worse to come, came a musical Latin *Tantum ergo*, which in its horrible violence outdid everything that had preceded. It was purely and simply club-blows and knife-stabbings on the tympanum ! Unfortunately I am not musical enough to point out the technical faults of the unmusical rendering of this *Tantum ergo*, but I can calmly swear that the thing was monstrous. If it had not been in church, on a solemn occasion, I could not have imagined that it was meant to be music at all. A couple of swallows who had made their nest in an aisle, fairly distant from the catastrophe, suddenly fluttered about and darted in anguish and confusion to and fro from the walls, till one escaped into the open air through a broken



window pane, while the other in despair fell into the cobwebs behind a picture. And these innocent little creatures have not even grasped all. How the Latin text was brought out and pronounced by these children of nature beggars description. It was barbaric. After the service the choirmaster stepped up to me in the square before the church and his rather self-conscious bearing made me suppose that he expected praise. I like to give my fellow-creatures harmless pleasure, but this time it was a question of high treason to Church music. When nothing came he said: What one can do in a village? But it costs much trouble and work to get so far. It costs trouble and work! And the same trouble and work not only in this one church orchestra, the same trouble and work, and an ocean of good-will, in many other village churches—with the same result.

But nothing is heard about it. Nobody complains, and yet there are assuredly numbers of people with musical feeling in the country. Am I the only unfortunate being whose taste is so godforsaken that he feels beauty as ugliness? But I cannot help it. My homely reason and my ears, thirsting for sweet harmony, are too often martyred in the world for me to be able to keep it to myself any longer. To speak plainly: in my opinion, and according to my feeling, long complicated pieces of music, and above all the Latin text, are an impossibility in village churches.

In former times they were less strict, and German



hymns were sung and German music played, in German village churches, things within reach of the capacity of the people. All at once came in our country a strict decree that Latin should be sung at the liturgical service, even amongst peasants, shepherds and woodcutters !!

The organ with popular singing is the fit music for our village churches. It ought to be cultivated, the village can do something in that direction, but in no other ! The people are fond of singing, especially in the mountains, and possess, as we know, good voices, out of which something might be made. And it is above all a question of reconquering in the Church the field for singing in German at high mass which has been so pitifully lost

Our churches do not only belong to the Roman Catholic clergy, they belong also to the state, to the German community, to the people. They are an heirloom from our forefathers, they not only served for the Confession of the Creed, they were the consecrated places of good behaviour, of communal feeling, of reverence and of art.



## Chapter VIII

### PRAYER AND THE COUNTRY PEOPLE

THE Power of Prayer ! A world-power, with which one reckons far too little. And yet it cannot be denied, nor is it denied, even by freethinkers. For they know the effect of auto-suggestion. What a man thinks continually, says to himself continually, desires continually, he strives for until he reaches it. One who always prays : Lord God, give me wealth ! is always endeavouring to acquire wealth, and the more fervent his prayer, the more energetic will be his striving for wealth, till he actually obtains it. The prayer is fulfilled, this time even without God. Or when some one prays fervently : Lord God, I am a poor sinner ! Let me be better, more charitable towards the poor, more just towards my brethren, grant me the grace that I become more perfect ; help me to it, I pray Thee, My God ! If a man ever prays like that, with all devotion and yearning, he must certainly possess in life and deed the true aspiration to improve himself. And so his prayer is fulfilled.

The unbeliever must admit so much. But then he must also admit that the man who prays thus believes



in Him to whom he prays, and that he believes in the fulfilment of what he desires. The greater his devotion, the stronger will be his confidence and strength to strive to gain his desire. So prayer becomes an efficacious auto-suggestion, which nobody should despise. And thus prayer, both in the regular exercises of individuals and in community, becomes an essential means of agitation for it concentrates men's hearts in a definite direction.

Thus far even the Atheist may confess to the power and the influence of prayer.

But the Christian conceives it in a far higher sense. Prayer is a lifting of the spirit and heart to God, an enduring submission to Him, a humble laying of the boon asked in His hands. The unbeliever has no notion of the bliss of a pious man who prays, who is at one with his beloved God. The praying Christian asks nothing farther in his prayer, he resigns himself to the will of God and feels secure and safe. And he is truly heard—safe and secure in God !

Jesus understood prayer in this sense of improvement and of resignation. May I say how He advised us to pray ? You will all probably know it ? Or do you not ? According to Matthew vi. 9-13 he said—Ye shall pray thus : “Our Father which art in Heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us



not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

The Lord's Prayer in the Roman Catholic Church differs a little from this version, yet the sense is the same. The slight change, however, is not what makes the Lord's Prayer valueless in many Roman Catholic countries. Yet it is of lesser value. Before I prove that fact the divine force which lies in this prayer, when spoken with devotion and fervour, must be demonstrated. All the burdens, anxieties and necessities of man are laid down in those few words ; all the seven prayers glow like an eternal heavenly fire with hope and blessedness. They contain all the humility of mankind, all the goodness and power of God. A mysterious solemnity descends upon the heart with the very beginning. Our Father which art in Heaven ! —In the simple dignity of him who prays the words sound like music. In happiness and joy they are a thank-offering, in trouble and death a heavenly consolation. The Lord's Prayer is said in the most important and holiest moments of human life. It is the magical spell which we remember in hours of danger and of terror ; it is the blessing of Jesus, which the righteous speaks in anguish and the sinner in hope.

We hear this prayer every day. Try once to grasp it, to penetrate its depths, you will feel its humanity with delight and its divinity with a sacred trembling.

But what do I hear ?



Passing by a farmhouse in the Alps at dinner-time let us stand still and listen. A swarm of wasps ? What does this even drowsy humming inside mean ? The servants stand or sit round the table, and in a stumbling slipshod tone, mechanically and lazily, yet with a certain rhythm, they bring out in common the following sounds.<sup>1</sup>

It is not only rattled off once, but a second time, a third—five times, seven times or oftener, till suddenly each of the persons present makes a zig-zag with the thumb across the face and rattles off: "Name God Father Son and Holy Ghost. Amen."

The stranger who sees and hears is astonished at a custom of which he imagines he has never heard. Is it a hymn ? Or is it a game ? A joke ? Dear friend, it is neither game nor joke. It is the Lord's Prayer !

According to the new Church decrees our peasants are ordered to sing Latin in the church choir ; but they do not understand high German. Nobody expects it of them, and they can say the Lord's Prayer in the Styrian, Carinthian or Tyrolese dialect.

But they do not say Our Father in the simple easily understood dialect ; it is rather a jargon, unspeakably corrupted through numberless, thoughtless repetitions, which nobody understands, however familiar he may be with the popular dialect. It is

<sup>1</sup> Here follows the Lord's Prayer as it would sound when spoken very fast in the Styrian dialect.



only with great trouble that he can piece together the connexion of the sounds with the original text.

The Roman Catholic Church has associated the Lord's Prayer with the *Ave Maria*. Perhaps there is some curiosity to know how that has been murdered as lip-prayer. We can hear it daily round us in the houses, in the chapels, the streets. Let the reader learn how the people, especially in the farm-houses in certain parts of the country, say the *Ave Maria*. It is even worse than the Lord's Prayer.<sup>1</sup>

That is the *Ave Maria*. I tremble to be accused of blasphemy on account of the simple rendering. And they do this a hundred times a day, and call it—praying !

We natives know how it is meant, we are accustomed to it, we scarcely notice it. But I have often been deeply ashamed when strangers heard it ; at first they were vastly astonished, but finally could not even restrain their laughter. How much has such praying been jeered at ! And it is really difficult to keep oneself from it ; only anger or grief can suppress the irony.

If only God understood such praying it would be sufficient. But God does not understand it, because as a rule the rumble of words does not contain the slightest spark of devotion. You may see by looking at the people's faces that it is devoid of devotion. One stares stupidly in front of him, another looks

<sup>1</sup> Here follows the *Ave Maria* in dialect, cf. preceding note.



greedily at the full dish or moodily at the empty one, a third thinks of this or that, a fourth joins in sleepily, others quiz each other, and so forth.

Now I hear an argument. Is it better, then, for people to go to their meal like the pigs to the trough—without the sign of the Cross and without Prayer. In my opinion it is almost better than to desecrate the Lord's Prayer by rattling it off in an irreverent fashion. It would be best if people, before and after a meal, lifted their hearts in thanks to the Eternal Father, who nourishes all without outward sign, and then thought too of those who are starving.

What I blame here I know by myself. How many thousand times in my youth have I similarly rattled off the Lord's Prayer with my family, without feeling in the least devout. But it was called "praying," "praying at table," "praying with the Rosary," "Josalme praying." On Sundays and holidays, and their vigils, the above-mentioned humming is repeated at home as well as in church, or on pilgrimages, at processions, at funerals, fifty, a hundred, yea a thousand times, without necessity, without the right mood, without even thinking in a fugitive way of the meaning of the formula. And that they call praying. For they think that the chief thing in praying is the words, and perhaps uncovering the head and folding the hands. But as they think here that they are praying and pray not, so they pray another time, and know it not.

When the peasant does his hard work for God's sake,



who has decreed that man shall be a toiler on the earth, that is a real prayer—only he does not know it. When the poor old woman sacrifices her grief humbly to the good God, when she thinks to-day she would like to give a piece of bread to a starving brother, because the Lord had blessed her with a whole loaf, that is a holy prayer—but she does not know that she prays. Yea, one can even pray during the rattling off of the “Psalter!” For it often happens that one has good thoughts during the recital of that formula; only they are quite different thoughts from those contained in the formula. The tongue stammers, the lips babble, and yet the soul has its peculiar way of raising itself to God during the accustomed humming. Lip-prayer may even be a certain outward occasion for prayer, but it is prayer itself in the rarest cases. The thoughts and the words have nothing in common with each other. The Lord’s Prayer in its, so to speak, ill-amended form is barren as such, and in this corruption something can grow up *beside* it but nothing *out of it*.

This is the condition of what is called praying among our country folk. Every one who knows the people well from within will and must agree with me.

Our good land has been blessed for centuries with schools and religious instructions, and the people still do not know how to pray. Even the Church does not offer them a good example. The sacristan has become a comic figure to many through the way in which



he leads the praying. Amongst the clergy themselves distinct pronunciation is mostly found in praying, but unfortunately also the mechanical, soulless rattling, which stands in a disagreeable contrast to the solemn saying of the Lord's Prayer by the Evangelicals. It might almost be believed that it had been laid down as a principle that a warm fervent tone was to be avoided at Church prayer, perhaps to prevent free scope to the divers natures, and perhaps to emphasize that the attitude towards God of one praying shall not be sensuous and passionate, but rather purely theoretical. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why our priests rattle off the prayers so mechanically and so coldly.

The Litanies of the Mother of God (Lauretanian Litany) of the Saints and of the name of Jesus belong also to the usual prayers. It is to be observed that the Jesus-Litany is far less frequently said in the churches than the Mary-Litany or the Saints'-Litany. But in this prayer, too, there is the same mechanical expression, thoughtlessness, and the lack of devotion.

More heartfelt devotion than in the appointed prayers may be found in the self-chosen ones, as for instance : " the Prayer of Tobias," " the prayers for the weather," " for fever," " for home and cattle," the old exercising formulas, etc. There is often a greater confidence in such productions, as they are to be had at fairs, than perhaps in the Lord's Prayer, which many simply do not know, in spite of rattling it off several dozen



times a day. Some one once recited the Lord's Prayer slowly and solemnly with all fervour to an old sick peasant. The old man was struck, wished to join in the Prayer, but suddenly he began to weep for emotion. It was almost as if he heard it for the first time in his life; he had not recognized this daily lip-prayer.

An old woman who had received a modest present promised to pray seven times "Our Father"; I explained to her that once would be sufficient, but it must be the real one which is to be found in Matthew vi. It is said that the old woman had it looked out for her, and was astonished how beautiful it was.

It is better not to remember in what other ways prayer is often misused. A few examples may be given as curiosities. I knew an old maidservant who at night in bed prayed for the "poor souls in Purgatory" so that she might the easier go to sleep. A superstitious woodcutter prayed to exorcise the ghost, which he believed he saw everywhere. An old cowherd prayed "bewitched diseases" away from the cattle. A shoemaker prayed that his village rival might die a sudden death. A horse-stealer promised to pray the psalms and to sacrifice a big candle to the mother of God at Mariazell if his next theft was successful. Such things are certainly not very common, but they do happen from misunderstanding of Christian prayer, and from piety and religiousness gone horribly astray.

And so there might be written a long but painful study on Prayer amongst the People. It might be



asked in astonishment, why, under such conditions, the Church lays so much stress on praying and the endless repeating of prayers. When our opponents say that it is desired by this means to keep the people from thinking, I remind those who have experience, how astonishingly much, and how profanely, people can think during such lip-prayer.

But that a certain satisfaction of the heart can lie in the most imperfect prayer, which may have a kind of success, I do not wish to deny. Yes, after all, a person after prayer for hours together, even if his heart remained altogether unconcerned in the matter, has the agreeable conviction of having carried out an action pleasing to God. And who can know that God may not after all say "Yes" to it? He has Himself pointed out in Luke xi. 5-8 the result of unceasing prayer, and has added with a touch of humour: If one did not listen to man's continual praying out of inclination, one would do so, at least, to get rid of his importunity.

If I were a country parson I should get hold of the young people. "My children," I would say, "we can also pray in thought. Every good thought about God, about our needy fellow-creatures, every desire to improve, to draw nearer to God and His elect, is prayer. But for him who wishes to pray aloud with words, the Saviour has put together in few sentences all we need to pray. But this Prayer of the Lord is far too good to be rattled off thoughtlessly at any



opportunity ; you must only say it at specially solemn times, and when your heart is in it, with the same devotion as if you were kneeling at the altar receiving the body of the Lord. For just as the priest lays the sacred Host on your tongue, so has the Saviour Himself laid His prayer on your tongue." And then they would learn from me once at least how to say the Lord's Prayer. . . .

But I am not the only person concerned. I believe that there are many priests who would be glad to speak thus to the young people of their parishes. But there exists in so many people a certain stiff-neckedness, and an indifference for the religious life of the heart, which defies all endeavour. It is not possible to make the clergy alone responsible for these peculiarities of character ; but if anybody can improve matters, the clergy take the first place. The school comes next. The better a man is educated, the more sensitive he is to spiritual, ethical, and religious matters. And lastly come writers that reach the masses with their task of pointing out weak spots and advocating reforms, as is my purpose here.



## Chapter IX

### FREE FROM ROME ?

**I**T was at the time of the Declaration of Infallibility of the Pope that Ludwig Anzengruber said : " Well, on account of that little bit ! If one believes 99 lb., why not at once the whole hundred ? "

That's it. And yet not quite ; at least, not with me. I believe in the Roman Catholic Church with all my heart, and all that she thinks to put before me out of the gospel of Christ. I honour the Roman Catholic Ritual, inasmuch as it edifies me, uplifts me, creates in me chastened feelings. I honour the sacraments, because they symbolize for me the lofty idea of Christianity. I honour the commands of the Church, because they lead us away from the world and bring us nearer to the divine. I believe the doctrine of Trinity, of the virginity of the mother of the Messiah, of the miracles and of the Resurrection of Christ, when I am permitted to take them so symbolically that they come near my understanding and my heart. And I feel in this belief the grace of a great happiness.

But if I am bound to believe that the Pope is as infallible as God Himself in all religious and Church affairs, and that the Pope on the basis of this infalli-



bility can make himself the unconditional master of all princes and nations of the earth in spiritual things, and if I am to believe that a man can solely be saved within this Roman Catholic Church, and that outside of it all men, however noble and good, must be lost—that is the hundredth pound that I am unable to bear. And in throwing off angrily this obtruded hundredth pound, it can easily happen that a few more pounds tumble away as well.

The Roman Catholic Church, they say, strives for the rule of the world. That it does. It is not only desirous of spreading the Roman Catholic faith universally (in this sense every faith and every sect tries to spread itself as widely as possible), but actually strives to be the chief influence upon society and politics in all countries. There is, however, no personal self-interest at play, as we find in dynasties that root themselves firmly in the world. It is a principle in the ecclesiastical hierarchy that none of the rulers can acquire material personal advantage. None can dispose for himself of Church property or pass it on to his family ; even the elected pope is only administrator, and his riches go back to the Church after his death. The Roman Catholic ecclesiastic lives less for himself than for a community, namely, the whole Church. And most of these men are convinced that a Roman Catholic temporal sovereignty of the whole world would be for its happiness. This conviction, that the Church acts with the best of



intentions, reconciles us in a certain degree to her lust for rule, which, nevertheless, in the sense of Christianity, is an enormous mistake.

It happens, not too often, it is true, that those dogmas and principles to which many a Roman Catholic priest has difficulty in reconciling himself in his inmost soul are loudly emphasized. There is at least some respect for sound human reason, which also comes from God. But sometimes they are proclaimed, and always to the vexation of those who know from Christ that His Kingdom is not of this world, that His Holy Spirit comes to every one who is of good will, and that all men are brothers and the children of one Father in Heaven.

It might be conditionally admitted that the Roman Catholic Church is the only one in which to find salvation. This is true for those to whose individual nature she and her institutions appeal. For others of a different cast, another creed is the only salvation that brings them nearer their God.

I am silent, for, according to well-known principles, this would be rank heresy. Besides, I do not pursue religion in a dogmatic-scientific way, nor would I pursue it scientifically if all theological knowledge were at my disposal. Religion is our inner, personal relation to God, and has nothing to do with earthly knowledge and its proofs. I am not to be shaken in my belief in Jesus Christ our Redeemer; and what way I can come nearest to Him is my



business. As far as the Roman Catholic Church, the Creed of my Ancestors, advances me on the way, I gratefully use her holy means. And she has very often bestowed on me abundant happiness. A bliss of the soul which, however, has been sometimes destroyed, not by herself, but by many of her representatives. When we find an absolutely worldly faction in the midst of the Church which pretends hypocritically to desire the salvation of all out of love, but actually in order to use them for its secular purposes ; when the Church passionately damns all who are not with her, nor can be with her ; when that faction, under the mask of religion, with a low cynicism is hostile to every one who, anxious and trusting, seeks God on other paths : such experiences incline us to make the Catholic Church which permits and supports those things responsible for the sins of this abominable party. Nothing angers me more than this indescribably haughty and envious looking down on men of other creeds, of which chiefly the Christian are the most hateful to them. Such conduct resembles common business jealousy as one hair does the other. It happens in every creed, which coquets with the world, its wealth and power, and I despise it in every denomination most thoroughly. Therefore I tremble for all churches that assume a worldly shape, and my prayer is ever to find and to recognize the spirit of God.

But that does not come off without discord. We



are human beings, sensuous beings, and what we take in through our senses becomes most at home in our hearts. Religion in the spirit is, of course, the highest, and it is always preached. And for the most of us it is too invisible, too inaudible, too incomprehensible ; we long for form, sound, odour, which God is to assume in order to show Himself to us ; for we are all more or less doubting Thomases, who must see in order to believe.

The longing for religion and worship which has at the present time been awakened in men is touching. In modern men ! It would scarcely have been thought possible. Let the Churches eagerly equip themselves to receive those who approach them. For there come modern men with larger views, who have other ideals by the side of religion—a wider humanity and patience, or a passionate national feeling, or who are sober men of intellect. These, coming to church not indifferent, but with an earnest intention, will desire that the form of recognition of God and of worship shall not contradict their ideals. Religion must not only uplift a man, but expand and perfect him ; it should not ignore worldly strivings, but sanctify them. And the Churches that do not wish to come to ruin must reckon with human modifications. I hope that the present movement may be of advantage to the Roman Catholic Church, for if it consents to reforms, it is the most irresistible.

A short while ago I entered a church early on Sunday



morning. It was in the centre of the town, and a peace, and a feeling of devoutness, and a self-surrender prevailed among the congregation—an atmosphere, in fact, that we imagine was to be found among the early Christians. The priest in the Roman Catholic robes stepped up to the altar, which was adorned with six lighted candles and a high crucifix. The choir sang German hymns to the sole accompaniment of the organ. At the sacrifice of the Mass the priest read the Epistle and the Gospel, not in a language which the congregation could not understand, but in the German mother tongue. Then he mounted the pulpit and spoke gently and lovingly of Christian teaching. Going again to the altar, he celebrated the sacrifice of Commemoration. It was the well known Roman Catholic Mass, but in German, not in Latin. The *Credo* German, the *Sanctus* German, the *Paternoster* German, the communion German, the last Gospel German, and the sanctification and partaking of the bread and wine in memory of the Lord in German too. And as it proceeded to its finish in noble, simple solemnity and fervour, it was the first time that the whole greatness of the Mass was clear to me. I could think and pray with the priest; no cold strange sounds, utterly valueless to the heart, disturbed me; it was in my own tongue that the officiating minister spoke to God. Never before had my mother tongue appeared so beautiful to me, nor the sacrifice of the Mass so sacred and edifying.

When it was over, something exclaimed in me :



Why should not I and my Alpine people have that in our churches? Why should the Roman Catholic Church, that loves us so dearly, not give us what is ours : divine service in the mother tongue ?

It is very difficult for laymen to understand why the Roman Catholic divine service should be held everywhere in a language which is nowhere understood. If Latin had been the language of Jesus ! But He Himself sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, so that they might speak to all peoples in their *own* tongues. A hundred thoughts arise about this matter, but I foresee that the view towards which I do now turn not for the first time, with qualms of conscience, will be combatted either with cheap scorn, or with scholastic, dogmatical reasons, of which there are always many to hand, but which in themselves and according to nature have no foundation. We have to pray humbly to the divine [in religion without desiring to understand it ; but to the human element in it—that is, the forms, worship and ritual—that we do wish to understand, we demand that it shall be in accordance with our being and our life.

Habit and indifference are to blame that the great mass of the people have so far calmly accepted the Latin service, the dogma of 1870, and other things. When people really become more religious, when they return to Christianity with their hearts, and again attach importance to its form of worship, they will bring with them their modern attribute—criticism,



before which dogma and vested institutions have to give way.

The cry : Freedom from Rome ! is heard now everywhere. It is a significant sign that belief should be turned to political purposes. Those Churches that have become political afford a type for that. And it is always dangerous to offer the soul for something worldly. The pastor did not receive in a friendly manner those persons who entered the Evangelical Church for purely political reasons, and we can understand that the council of the Austrian Evangelical Church should have warned his reverence not to take part in an agitation which had little to do with the Christian religion. The matter is, however, significant. Political or national ideals may have given the first impulse to the new movement, but many others joined in it whose defection meant something more than politics ! And if we look at the dogma, which reminds us of the arrogant angels in Heaven, and the heartless impatience which despises and condemns everything that is not in exact line with every letter of the decrees ; and the putting aside of the Gospel for the Catechism ; and also the outspoken hostility to our people, the German people, which causes dispute over the use of the German language in the Churches—displeasure truly becomes a living force. And yet when the beauty and dignity of the Roman Catholic service in German form is known, people ask : Why should we not have it ?

Freedom from Rome ! The cry will scarcely die down



so soon, for too much has happened to injure our rights and feelings. A larger defection will cause terror, but no one ought to be surprised.

Naturally I do not imagine that our untiring wishes and requests will find consideration, even if the whole German nation shouted: "Ye protectors of Christianity, join together in patience and benevolence, and give God something that is of God; and likewise give mankind something that is of mankind; and to the nations something that is of the nations! I fear it would be vain. He who attaches less importance to the cask than to the wine may console himself, if he likes, that the Gospel is to be found in all Christian Churches and—sometimes—even outside them! But release from Rome would mean a heavy conflict for many. It cannot be helped; it must settle it itself.

I have expressed my point of view without any intention of changing that of others. My advice in such matters is that a man must question his own conscience often and earnestly. A man to whom the Church has become indifferent, a man who has lost confidence in it, and yet who wishes to be a believer in Christianity, he may honestly ally himself with anything else that makes him happy and helps him morally, whether it be the strict Protestantism that has returned to the Gospel, or whether it is the Ancient Catholicism standing between that and the Romish Church. And if it is the purely *spiritual* Christianity, so much the better.



## Chapter X

### HOW I PICTURE TO MYSELF THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS

ONE of the chief aspects of our South German Fairs—so far as there is no drinking or brawling—is their piety. It comes, so to speak, into commerce in the shape of rosaries, figures of saints, etc. Thus we find on small sheets of paper, the real and genuine portrait of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a soulless copy of the current Christ type, which, by the by, may be as right or wrong as the heavenly picture of this unique Son of Man, which has prevailed among us since the Middle Ages, and which, through the prism of dogma, has completely lost the original warm-blooded shape in which we could thoroughly comprehend and love the Lord. Besides, whence could a veritable picture of Jesus come? In His time there were neither portrait-painters nor photographers in Palestine to whom He could have sat. And that He put Himself at the disposal of a Gentile sculptor is nowhere to be read. The legend goes that Luke, the Evangelist, was a painter; it is just possible that the disciples begged the Master to let Himself be



“immortalized” by the artist, or that the painter had fixed His likeness from memory, but Luke apparently never saw Him. With the exception of John and Matthew none of the Evangelists saw Him. They lived quite a generation later than the Saviour, and based their writings on verbal traditions. According to a beautiful legend Jesus impressed His face on Veronica’s handkerchief on His way to the Cross; but it is only a beautiful legend. Of quite a different importance for us is how His Spiritual Personality impressed itself on the minds of His contemporaries.

It is the Gospels, the only document of the Personality of Jesus, that have given an enduring impression: from them we can shape a material picture. The interest in it is immensely great. Jesus accompanies in one way or another every one of us through life, be we believers or not; although even to-day, at the beginning of the twentieth century after Christ, we do not really know what Christianity means.

On many a day we go to bed at night full of sorrow; for what we desire to do is rarely accomplished, and on the morrow the wild struggle for existence, the hard struggle for the Ideal will begin anew. In such anxious moods I like to pick up the Gospel, out of which my forefathers drew their refreshment and their hope, and out of which, so to speak, their redeemed souls speak to me again. And when in the winter of 1899, I was confined to my room for many weeks with a lung complaint, as it were, in a monastery severed from



the world, only living in the realms of my soul, I once more absorbed myself in the Gospels. . And it was a joy to me, out of this document, as I understood it without Theological Commentary, to piece together a picture of Jesus, which came the nearer to my heart the more human it shaped Itself. The Jesus, who finally stood by my bedside, was not the same that stepped out to us from the twilight of the middle ages.

A man lived on the banks of Jordan who—according to the longing of the Jewish people—preached a new Kingdom of God, announced the approach of the expected Messiah, invited the people that listened to him to repent, and as a sign of communion baptized them with water. Among the crowd which used to collect round the Prophet John was one day a young man, a carpenter from the not distant Nazareth, who was likewise baptized. Later on, after He had concentrated His mind and prepared Himself in the solitude of the desert, that man came forward as a popular Preacher. He wandered up and down through the countries of Galilee, Samaria and Judea, and wherever He came was a great concourse of people. They listened to His sermons, which were based on the law of Moses, yet far surpassed them, on the one hand by their severity, on the other by their gentleness and gladness of heart. The people passionately longed for His words, and at His approach often fell into a state of downright ecstasy. They saw miracles. And the more they happened the more of them they wished to



see, so that He was annoyed when they would not believe without miracles.

He must have been a very striking man, although He dressed like other people. He must have had an exceedingly fascinating manner. I picture Him to myself as slender and thin, clad in an undergarment and a long woollen coat. His beard young and thick ; His hair dark brown, falling over the nape of His neck in thick locks, curling slightly at the ends ; His face pale and delicate ; His lips full and red ; His eyes, with the moist brilliancy of kindness and of pity, but at times with a fire that struck all beholders. He carried neither hat nor staff ; on His feet He wore probably sandals. For that He should have walked barefooted over the long stony paths I find no indication in His teaching. Jesus was no ascetic. He bore the greatest trials without complaints, with stoic calm, but He did not seek them. He thought little of fasting for the sake of fasting ; He only regarded it as means towards spirituality. He often blamed the Jews for making external things of such great importance in their religion—fasting, public prayer, ostentatious almsgiving and other formal exercises. He was an enemy of the external things that lead away from the inner life and raise up the false semblance of fulfilment. He gladly allowed Himself to be invited to banquets. He ate and drank gladly, liked a well-arranged dining-hall ; so that even for the Supper which was to be His last, He chose a hall, which was laid with carpets and pro-



vided with cushions. He did that, perhaps, not on account of comfort, but rather on account of the solemnity, the dignity of the occasion.

He does not seem to have possessed anything of value; but ever conscious of His mission He demanded from others, who had possessions, the support of Himself and His disciples. So thoroughly was He convinced of his mission, that He considered it the people's duty to provide for Himself and His adherents, and cursed those who did not do so.

The Evangelists tell us but little of His relations with His family. Whether His mother rejoiced at His teaching? Whether she was sadly grieved at the Son whom it was impossible to influence, who went His own way, persecuted by the priestly and secular authorities, towards the most shameful of criminal deaths!

He acknowledged only spiritual family ties—only relations in God. I do not remember any special expression of opinion regarding the necessity of Conjugal Unions; He Himself did not marry. But when and where marriage existed, He wished it to be strictly adhered to, and even condemned the breaking of the marriage vow in thought. He was full of mildness and indulgence towards penitent sinners; towards hardened ones, full of glowing wrath. He was always the advocate of the poor and the oppressed, to them He was infinitely good, in spite of their faults and lowliness. But He stood on an irreconcilable



footing of war with the self-seeking of the rich and the uncharitableness of those in Power.

Gentle and modest, as we understand the terms to-day, Jesus was not. Rather was He energetic and self-assertive. Near the end, when they were pursuing Him, He fled once across Lebanon, but soon returned, and opposed His enemies with downright aggression. The lectures which He gave to the Pharisees and the Jewish priests in Jerusalem were as cutting and fierce as a sweeping storm. Of His own accord, He one day entered the Temple, where the dealers took their stand, upset their stalls and chased the traders out of it with whips. Where the disciples sought encouragement and consolation from Him, He often answered them—in our sense—harshly, and by no means with kind, soft words, as would be done nowadays among friends. He loved John tenderly, to whom He never said a hard word, while He often roughly reproved Peter. Jesus was anything but sentimental. Sometimes His words appear to us harsh, even full of wrath, sometimes intermingled with bitter irony. He made a sharp separation between what He liked and what He disliked; He hated compromise. He felt the greatest animosity for those who juggled with words, for hypocrites and prigs; He preferred to have to do with avowed sinners. With respect to His teaching He was unbending; with respect to His person, He was full of humility and abnegation. The greatness of His gentle-



ness and of His forgiveness of His enemies only came to light at the fulfilment of His destiny. He possessed the proud, divine courage of a personality convinced that nothing can happen to it, because the mortal body is nothing, the immortal soul all. That divine consciousness made Him invincible.

He probably walked along gravely, without much saluting or returning salutes. He never intruded, but where He was wanted, He gave Himself with all His soul. His speeches were scarcely made in the pathetic tones of preaching, but rather in the Hebrew fashion, lightly and quickly spoken, according to momentary inspiration. For He did not bring what He had learned off, but what sprang from His inmost nature. He liked to speak in parables, which, according to our idea of speech, do not always conceal His thought. Therefore we must not take everything literally, and we must not forget that many references are made to things and circumstances unknown to us, and that the Orientals like to speak in hyperboles.

For more than two years He wandered thus through the land, always accompanied by impatient or enthusiastic adherents, ever suspected by the authorities, who laid many traps for Him, which He cleverly escaped. He took His meals with the people in the open air, and all was shared in brotherly fashion. He was probably often obliged to spend the nights in the open air, living only for His kingdom, which was not of this



world. He was uncommon in everything, superhuman, a Son of God.

Where Jesus is the most divine, there He is the most human. He who easily renounces all that is meant by pleasure of this world, goods of this world, cares of this world, possesses the purest joy of life. And so the teaching of Jesus, which appears severe beyond measure to the child of this world, is a mild, sweet yoke to him who lives his life happy in childlike confidence in the Heavenly Father—royally supreme over change and sorrow. You shall live for the day and take no thought for the morrow. You shall wander with staff and scrip, be without a second coat, and if necessary be satisfied with berries and a poor roof. Your whole life and all your ambition is to be filled with the love of your Heavenly Father and of your fellow-men. And now comes the most important thing of all: you shall also love your enemies. In most cases this self-sacrifice assures a tranquil existence; for an enemy, whom you do not oppose, to whom you do good with all your heart, will cease to be a foe. We have a German student's song, which says: I have placed my desire upon nothing, hurrah! When I hear those words I always think of happy Christianity, of walking along in childlike innocence and divine rejoicing, with the sure faith that our immortal soul is on the right road to the heart of God.

This kindly joy in God and man, this childlike absence of care is, in my opinion, the divine in Christianity,



the Kingdom of God within us, which makes us already blessed on earth.

That Jesus sometimes bluntly expressed that ideal, and was finally obliged to sacrifice His own life, is the eternal contradiction which lies in the Divine-Human. This contradiction does not exclude the fact that Jesus was the Conqueror, and that we may also become victorious, rejoicing under earthly trials in the soul-union with God.

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That, then, out of the abundance of what might be said, is the outline of my comprehension of the reality of Jesus and His doctrine. That is the sense in which I understand the Bible, and I once desired to represent my irregular view in my "Home-Garden"<sup>1</sup> But at home in Austria it has not been permitted me to do so. The police have—of that more anon—taken possession of the essay. They found in these ideas of mine—which, as regards the solemn subject, certainly suffer from the utmost insufficiency—nothing less than blasphemy.

In my opinion every Christian ought to have the right to comprehend the Gospels in his own way, without much dogmatic explanation, without any mediator. Do not the manifold meanings point to the fact that each individual shall find out his own? If learned mediators were required to explain the teaching of Jesus, the Saviour would certainly only have spoken

<sup>1</sup> *Heimgarten* a publication.



to the Scribes and Theologians and not to the crowd, which—see the Apostles themselves—chiefly consisted of simple-minded people. Let each man take the Word as he can grasp it. What he does not perhaps understand to-day he will understand to-morrow. And if a mistake is made, that will do no harm so long as there is good-will. After all each one of us creates his God according to his own heart, and each nation makes for itself a Saviour such as it most needs.

But it is quite comprehensible that the doctrine of the Nazarene was and still is persecuted. In the eyes of the Pharisees and other people He was a rebel, a disturber of Religion and a blasphemer, who, if He reappeared to-day, would be treated in just the same way even in the “Most Christian” Empire! And indeed, if we can imagine that the people had at that time accepted His teaching, so suited to the poor and down-trodden, and lived in accordance with it, no bloody rebellion would have ensued, but the existing States would not have been any longer possible. The Roman State must have ceased to exist, and not one of our present States could exist, if the people lived strictly after Christ’s teaching. No priests, no soldiers, no wild chase after wealth and honour—it would be a pleasure to live! Or would our fine senses fall short? I think not.

And that is remarkable. It is a doctrine which is actually followed nowhere and yet one which can never disappear out of the world. As often as Over-



Civilization turns sick with disgust at itself, as often as mankind sees its worldly aspirations and proud successes turn into great catastrophes, there awakes a longing for the conditions which Jesus designated by the phrase, "the Kingdom of God." Then what was formerly pain becomes joy, then the Soul-Forces are awakened with all that is appropriate to them, the miracles, and everything occurs that puny man has so haughtily denied.

Jesus knew man, not only of His time or of the present time—but man purely and simply. He showed him the highest ideal but prepared a number of resting places in the steep upward path. The doctrine which appears so immeasurably austere is the gentlest and most loving mother in comparison with the insatiable civilization, which relentlessly chases its people and finally devours them. Jesus demands—if we really understand Him—nothing except that man shall become a happy, innocent child with simple wants.

Only do not persist in asking if this is possible. It is possible to many. The true Christian would say: He who is still a child, let him remain one. Even if as such he is socially ruined that ruin is more divine than the restless possessing and ruling in an unblessed world.

But if they then come and say: Man neither is nor ever was an innocent child, for he brought into the world with him original sin—I do not understand



it. Were the children whom Jesus describes as innocent, already sinners? If Jesus preaches repentance to sinners, He probably does not mean that people should fast, torment themselves, etc., but He means that they should, if possible, make reparation for the sins they committed—return wrongly gained property, confess lies, correct errors, put away an overplus of material wealth, forgive enemies and in every way strive to obtain peace of mind, divine joy, in short—a good conscience. As far as his powers go man shall do that for himself, and only when his own strength ceases call for the mediation of Christ. But he must not sin carelessly or wantonly, reckoning on Christ's intercession and then full of repentance strike his breast, saying: "Lord, be merciful unto me a sinner!"

Jesus did not wish to reduce man to a worm wriggling in the infinite consciousness of guilt, but to raise him to a rejoicing, justified child of God.



## Chapter XI

### CONSEQUENCES OF A CONFISCATION

SOMETIMES being ill is a pleasure—that is to say when we make it one.

In the winter of that year I was confined to my bed with illness for three weeks. When the days when I could not think were over, and my mind was re-awakened and demanded suitable occupation, I thought of some particularly interesting reading, that is, the re-reading of the Gospels. Not in fragments and extracts as is usually done, but all the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, quickly one after the other—the whole, so to speak, in one breath. And that is what my poor mind did.

I began to read the sacred book for edification ; it turned out to be a pleasure. For during the reading, which lasted about days four, such gladness, such Christian joy entered into me, that finally the word pleasure was not suitable at all, unless it was that the illness was a pleasure, because it took me away sufficiently from earthly power in order that I might live entirely for the ideas of the Holy Message.

I read the German translation of Dr. Leander van



Ess, which is approved and recommended by many Roman Catholic prelates. For comparison I used the translation of Allioli and the People's Bible of A. A. Waibel, all learned Roman Catholic theologians.

What sort of a Christ did I meet there ! A Christ rejoicing in God, humane, delighting in the world, full of powerful activity, full of devoted love, full of fiery wrath at the right time. A super-man, a God-man in the highest sense. I had never seen Him like that before. I called my children to my bedside, I called my wife, and told them of the great Christ whom I had found, with whom to walk, in whom to trust meant deliverance from all care and earthly burdens. They then read aloud to me whole portions, and although they were at first astounded at my enthusiasm for such a well known thing, at last they understand my joy.

In one of my sleepless nights I lighted my candle, took paper and pencil and wrote down quickly the sketch of the Jesus Christ whom I had met, face to face, as it were, in the Gospel.

Later on when my *Heimgarten* required "copy" and I searched my portfolios I found the sketch with the title : "How I picture to myself the Personality of Christ ?" <sup>1</sup> The thing was considered now in cold blood. It was after all nothing new, had been said a thousand times far more thoroughly and better ; it might be occasionally heard—perhaps in other words

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the preceding chapter.



—from the pulpit. And yet, I thought to myself, what harm can it do, if a short sketch, be it ever so superficial, of the most glorious figure, appears for once in the *Heimgarten*. There are after all so many Christians who do not know their Christ.

The sketch was printed in the number of the *Heimgarten* for May, 1899. And it was at once taken possession of by the Police in Graz, on account of the article on Jesus.

I did not believe my ears when the publishers sent me word of this, I did not believe my eyes when the men took forcible possession of the whole edition, ordered the objectionable article to be torn out of all copies, to put it behind bars and bolts, and to be destroyed by-and-by by prisoners.

I disputed with the official in his room for a whole hour, and it is only to be wondered at that he neither showed me the door nor made my exit impossible. I must confess that the police official was incomparably more civil to me than I was to him. But the interview revealed to me that an abyss as deep as hell lay between us in regard to the comprehension of Religion and Christianity. Not that they took umbrage at single passages, careless expressions, historical inaccuracies in my essay, no, the whole, from first to last with the exception of the title was prohibited and pronounced blasphemy.

On my way home I felt both pleased and sorry. Pleased, because I thought it was perhaps good that



this unimportant work on such a highly important subject should not come into the *Heimgarten*. It would probably have been passed over with indifference. Sorry because——well, that can be easily imagined.

Meanwhile the essay had been sent to the periodical *Die Zukunft* in Berlin. When it was so strictly prohibited in Graz that not a copy and not a line might be published, I wired at once to Berlin to stop the printing of it. It was too late, fate took its course. My essay on the personality of Christ was already printed and overflowed the unsuspecting world in one day with thousands of copies.

I at once made known my desire that no notice should be taken of the article. Firstly the confiscation had to be respected, and secondly, I now intended to treat the subject which had roused so much interest more at large. Yet the essay took ever firmer hold of the public.

A large number of other papers copied it from the *Zukunft*: daily papers, weekly papers and monthly reviews, chiefly Protestant ones, but some Roman Catholic ones too, so that the article so strictly forbidden in Graz fled through all lands in many hundred thousands of copies. And to me flew the letters. One from the land of the Guelphs was among them which cursed the arm that had written the article and the eye that had looked at it. All the rest of the numerous letters either rejoiced that there was so much liberal Christian feeling in the essay, or regretted that a



thing so widely advertised (many actually thought confiscation an advertisement!) should turn out to be something so very ordinary and commonplace, that consequently great disappointment followed. Other missives expressed their opinion of Austrian Censorship—"Indeed, if it was like that, many things were easily understood!" What the clever gentlemen found easy to understand in our conditions I do not know. Besides such letters there came newspapers that discussed the case, disputations of many kinds, at last voluminous works on Gospel research and the Personality of Jesus. I read all with the greatest attention, always fearing my little would be shown to be wrong in some important point. However except a chronological error and a few unimportant minor details everything agreed with the scholars. Only that many—I do not speak of Renan and Strauss—had represented the historical Christ as far more realistic, more worldly, than I had done. And the evangelists Matthew and Luke are the most realistic.

So I was forced by this circumstance into a careful study of the Bible, which was the more valuable for me the more immediately it was concerned with the Evangelists. Of what I had formerly written, partly from instinct, I now had certain knowledge. And I became conscious of something else at the same time. That any one should place himself openly in opposition to the evangelical Christ was not to be understood. "Any one" here refers to the clerical papers, which



violently opposed a confiscated essay, criticized in public the article, although they neither knew nor dared to know anything about it. Neither did the public know, it and therefore the abominable "blasphemies" which it contained could only be imagined.

How happy I should have been if one of our Catholic clergy had said, Let him keep the Christ that gives him satisfaction. And if it is not quite in tune with our tradition, he does not force Him upon any one, only relates how he imagines to himself the Personality of Jesus.

Some clerical wit insisted that I had "tailored for myself a Christ" most convenient for my daily use. That is truly not the case. The Evangelists are not to be bargained with. My Christ is a sterner man than the one they sometimes introduce to us from the pulpit ; He is not satisfied with the so-called Good Works, prayer, fasting, pilgrimages, almsgiving, etc., neither with the Reverence of the Sanctuaries, with the Receiving of the Sacraments. He is not to be dismissed by reliance on God's Grace alone, He exacts more. He exacts much that is very difficult for me to do, even that which I cannot manage to carry out with my poor humanity. But His strong, glad Personality fills me with the confidence that what is not I may yet be. A little while before I had read the writings of the great Father of the Church, St. Augustine, and I could not find myself in agreement with them. In the Middle Ages I should probably have sworn to



them unconditionally, but they do not harmonize with the present ways and manners of man ; the books confused me and made me lose heart. The greater and freer was now the being lifted up by Christ Himself. Firstly I felt a stronger inclination towards my fellow-men, whom I had often shunned and whom I could only love a little at a greater distance. I remembered, whenever I met a human being, what immense value Christ puts upon every single personality, however poor and despised, even on the fallen sinner. And that it was the lost for whom He chiefly and most lovingly laid down His life. There are Socialists, the very reddest, who deny God and the immortal soul, who, full of hatred, stand in opposition to society and desire to annihilate the whole of civilization through an enormous revolution. I felt with them not only human pity, I felt affection for them, I understood their thoughts and desires, and excused them as a product of their circumstances. I felt a great longing to help them, to lift them to the level where we can all strive together for a better future, for a happier Soul-Realm, the Kingdom of God. Works of mercy must certainly be done but not in the shape of alms and individual charity, as in olden times, but by collective Social Reform. We do not want any one who makes a business of begging and asking, we want great organized methods of working. To the old belief in God must be added a modern belief in the World and in Mankind, in order to create a Kingdom of God in



the Christian sense. Whether I am ready for the great personal sacrifices which Christ demands of us? As it stands to-day, no. They would be no good, as rendered by a single individual. But when many, sufficiently many people render up their possessions voluntarily, sacrifice their bodily strength to the general weal, then I shall be of them. When there is no master then I will be servant. When no one is luxurious then I will suffer want. Meanwhile it is still necessary in a narrow worldly circle joyfully to advance the divine.

I am inclined by nature to flee men and world. Since the evangelical Christ is present with me, I rejoice at the beauty and strength of the world, without danger of becoming its prey; I seek cheerful society, without fear of losing myself. The unconventionality of a greater liberty is in me. I do not feel my infinite incapacity, which formerly made me so deeply despondent, any less to-day, I even feel it more, but I feel myself secure in the universality of the human race and comforted by the faith that the Lord will not let His children be lost, and blesses in each of us the good intention.

My joy in the Gospel often inclines me to discuss it with others, and also to make the understanding in regard to various portions clearer and deeper, but I find nobody willing. I addressed myself nearly always in vain to those who at the time went over to Protestantism. They had, with few exceptions, no mind



for and no comprehension of religious questions, their change of creed often sprang from other motives. I often tried, verbally and by writing, to discuss the Gospels with Roman Catholic clergymen, but no sooner did they enter upon it than they at once fell back upon the commands of the Church. I need not remind the readers of my writings in what position I stand towards the Roman Catholic ritual. However, meditations on the Gospels with discussion would have helped me. So far the priests have never come; they referred to the sermons, which exclude dialogue, to confession which does not suffer questioning; on the whole they were always evasive, as if they did not know themselves, or as if a layman were not worthy to discuss such elevated subjects with them. There have been times when I longed for their sympathy, yet they have given me mistrust and nothing but mistrust. They have always seen in me one gone astray and lost, but none came to seek me in kindness. On the other hand I have found encouragement and uplifting in conversation with Protestant clergy. Without trying to make a Protestant of me they could talk of our Saviour and His divine doctrine comfortably and lovingly with a Roman Catholic, subjects that become deeper and higher, the more we enter into them and the more they are treated from different sides. Their theoretical study has often confused and weakened me. But when the consciousness of my own way of thinking stepped again into the foreground, I was



forced to write and to confess what lived in me. Thus my book, *My Father's Kingdom* came into being.

That turn of affairs is due to the confiscation of my unimportant essay on Jesus—a small cause for a development of much meaning to myself. And yet there exists a severe conflict in me. A conflict which not all can feel with me, which will appear superfluous and foolish to many a one, just because so many have no idea of the power of a longing for God. I am a Roman Catholic through my ancestors, I acknowledge and honour much in the Roman Catholic Church, she is the home of my childhood's remembrances, of my affection for the mystical and of the joy of my senses. And yet I am drawn toward the Evangelicals, because according to my experience and conviction, the doctrine of Christ is more purely taught by them than is generally the case in the Roman Catholic Church. An evangelical sermon is, at the present time, a veritable refreshment. It happens rarely that they scold, clamour, stir up to persecution, cursing other creeds and damning the souls of those who hold them. But if it should happen, I should run away from a Protestant Church as speedily as from a Roman Catholic one. It would be hard to me to leave the Roman Catholic Church, and yet I am often obliged to take the part of the Protestants, to support their Christian (not their political) endeavours as and where I can. I am still waiting for the Roman Catholic Church to turn away more from worldliness, temporal power and politics, and



turn towards the doctrine of Jesus. Meanwhile I find it in harmony with my conscience as a Roman Catholic to assist at an evangelical service, to obtain there comfort and strength for life. Sometimes it seems to me in such hours as if a new life were rising for me. And yet I tremble. For who can know how far Grace will go? If this confidence will hold good when trial and sorrow come? If Divine strength will be there when lasting misfortune depresses body and spirit? And if it comes to dying! They say it is good living under the crozier, good dying under the cross. It is my daily prayer for the grace to think and to exist so that Christ, the Saviour, may be able to stand by me. One merit and one only I take to myself: good-will.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Essays "How I picture to myself the personality of Jesus," and "Consequences of a Confiscation," are printed here in their entirety because they were the cause of this book, and of another "I.N.R.I., a Prisoner's Story of the Cross."



## Chapter XII

### CONCERNING BIBLE-READING

**M**Y casual remark that the Gospels might once again be put on the Index was laughed at as a joke. It would be too illogical that Christians should neither know nor be allowed to read the foundations of our Christian faith and our ethical teaching. But whilst innocent minds held it to be purely and simply incredible, it was long ago an accomplished fact. The Bible, the New as well as the Old Testament, is in general prohibited in the Roman Catholic Church. Our clergy do not like to admit that which is comprehensible, but after all it is not their fault. Many priests do not agree with this measure in their inmost hearts and are yet obliged to defend the decree of the Church. Sometimes, however, a clumsy solution of the difficult task is made, when they assert that the Bible is by no means prohibited, because you might read it in the Latin tongue! Whether our people would make much use of the permission to read the Bible is a question. They have grown too indifferent.

Let me call to mind how it has ever been with respect to the reading of the Bible. In the first centuries the Roman Catholic Church had no reason to forbid the



Bible to the Faithful. Many people must have then understood the art of reading, for the great Fathers of the Church—Chrysostom, St. Jerome and Augustine—and also Popes, earnestly exhorted the laity to read the Bible very diligently. But later when the Church developed into a temporal kingdom, came the forbidding of the Bible, and many people, and perhaps rightly, understood that the Church wished to avoid a comparison with the Gospel. She introduced the Latin tongue for the ritual, and doled out to the nations in their native idiom only certain revised extracts from the Bible. In the Middle Ages every proprietor of a translated Bible was declared a heretic. Bibles were even burnt. Then came Martin Luther's Translation of the Bible into German, the spreading of which was carried on outside the power of the Church. Catholic Revisions of Holy Writ were undertaken in order to keep out that Bible as much as possible. I do not think that intentional falsifications of the text occurred in such Roman Catholic popular Bibles; on the other hand, several parts were provided with explanations and meanings in the Roman Catholic spirit. Such explanations also went as God's Word. Frequently the explanations tended to show that the Gospel was merely there on account of the Roman Catholic Church, instead of the reverse. Translations of the Bible without explanations and expositions were and remained forbidden. No one was allowed—it is written—to read the New Testament (the Gospel,



the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles) without being cast forth as a heretic. All translations of the Bible had to have the approbation of the Bishops, but even that was not held sufficient, because there were Bishops, and often very many, who had no objection to the people reading the original Bible, whenever it was not provided with special explanations. At last the Church became more lax because, outside Protestant circles, the spreading of the costly editions among the people never had much importance. At the beginning of the last century the Bible Associations came into existence, first in England. They were of Protestant origin, but included also numberless Catholics, even priests and prelates, amongst their members. These Bible Associations spread the Bible for an incredibly cheap price, under certain conditions even gratis. They spread Holy Writ in all languages and through all the countries of the earth. About two hundred millions of copies of the writings of the New Testament have been circulated amongst the nations. Though the Bible Associations do not only publish Protestant translations, but also, and naturally, Roman Catholic ones approved by the prelates for Roman Catholic countries. Such a translation, for instance, is by Leander van Ess, which can be purchased of all German booksellers for a fabulously cheap price. The New Testament, prettily bound, costs fivepence, and if a poor person comes to beg for the Word of God, he probably gets it for nothing.



Thus the Roman Catholic Church finds itself obliged again to remind its adherents that the Bible as such stands on the Index, that is to say on the list of books prohibited by the Church, and that only such Roman Catholic translations are admissible that are provided with the explanations and expositions of the Church. Nothing would be objected to these explanations if they were held to be what they are—human words liable to error.<sup>1</sup>

Only in the year 1897 came forth a decree concerning books, which is unostentatiously carried out, but as thoroughly as possible, and runs thus : “ As it has been proved by experience, that if Holy Writ in the Current Tongue is permitted universally and without distinction, through the arrogance of men more harm is done than good, therefore translations in the Mother Tongue are generally prohibited, even when published by Roman Catholics, unless approved by the Roman See or provided with Annotations made under the supervision of the Bishops, taken from the holy Fathers of the Church and other Roman Catholic writers.”

“ On account of the arrogance of man ! ” Yes, was it not for that reason that Christ and his teaching came ? I deny, in unison with many millions of men, that

<sup>1</sup> Whoever remembers the arbitrarily written Prayer-Books, Books of Absolution, the Tracts on Miracles, etc., as they are to be had with or without approbation at fairs, places of pilgrimage, and from hawkers, without any objection on the part of the Roman Catholic priest, must be painfully struck by the prohibition of Holy Scripture.



more harm than good comes from the general spreading of God's Word. Let us only look round and see how the Bible-reading nations grow healthy and strong. If the Bible does good to the Christians in Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, England, America, etc., it will not hurt the German nations either.

The most astonishing things result with us if we speak of the Bible to people who have studied and are said to be educated. They are, with few exceptions, as ignorant in this matter as pigs. A doctor who left school twenty years ago and who plays a fashionable rôle in aesthetic circles, knew nothing of the Sermon on the Mount, except that on that occasion Jesus gave the Keys to Peter and told him : "Thou art my well-beloved son, with whom I am well pleased. Thou shalt be Pope." And that was not the worst. A teacher of languages, who when in society likes to discuss Church politics, declared that the New Testament was the last of the five Books of Moses.—What must it be among the uneducated. The little Bible teaching at school has long ago evaporated. No interest for it has been left behind. But that you must not eat meat on Friday, that you may obtain absolution at the devotional service of the Heart of Jesus, and can sacrifice it for the poor souls in Purgatory, and that Martin Luther is roast meat in Hell—that every one knows who attends Roman Catholic lectures.

No, I did not mean to get bitter, and yet I am be-



coming so. How I should like to vindicate the matter ; but it is impossible. It is too criminal.

We ask in all seriousness : Why will our Church keep the complete and pure Gospel from the people ? Is it that she does not any longer feel herself in tune with it ? Is it because she and she alone will be mediator between God and man ? Or is it that she is afraid the laity might misunderstand or wrongly conceive the Word of God without commentary.

I leave the first two possibilities undiscussed. But one thing is striking, and I have pointed that out for years, namely, that the Church puts the Gospel too much in the background, even where she is in a position to explain it herself and to expose the facts, as for instance in school, in the pulpit, in the confessional. Parts of the Gospel are certainly read in the pulpit, those from which are derived the Commandments of the Church, the Sacraments, the services of the Church and good works by means of Roman-Catholic exposition, but beyond that the latter things are placed in the foreground so that the Gospel as such does not come in evidence. Clerical papers have shown great indignation at my by no means isolated reproach concerning the neglect of the Gospel, but the best and most sensible persons in the Roman Catholic Church have a notion that this neglect must become fatal for the Church. Let them only think of the Reformation, of the present movement of Apostasy, which in my opinion has the love of the Gospel as chief cause.



The movement of Apostasy would be still greater if so many people had not become indifferent to religion. The religious life of our time shows us a laity indifferent to religion or very bigoted, the Churches against, aggressive and intolerant towards each other often to madness.

An improvement of these circumstances, and deepening of the religious life, does not naturally depend on Bible reading alone ; what is read must go into the heart and thence come out in deeds. Theoretical manufacture of religion, the making a hobby of dogmatic principle, learned laying down of law of what has simply to be believed—all this produces an abominable Pharisee business. To believe with confidence and love heartily, that is all.

Faith in the efficacy of the sacrifice of the Mass, love for the Mother of Christ, can be a trusting belief and a hearty loving, the value of which I never denied. Only it must not stray from the spirit of the Bible, or it turns into Paganism.

It must be observed here that by the word Bible I mean the New Testament. Yes, but how is it then with the Old ? The Old Testament is an inexhaustible treasure of history, poetry and wisdom. But it often turns too much to the secular sphere ; as concerns religious—for instance—I have not much use for the Old Testament with the exception of the Psalms. I find the best of the Patriarchs and Prophets in Jesus. I do not need for my Christ any testimony from the



Old Testament, I believe Him implicitly. Neither do I approve this continual referring back to the Hebrews, in order to prove Christ, in the Protestants. Their sermons often contain more passages from the Old Testament than from the Gospels. With all due respect to the Canon, I should only consider Hebrew doctrine in Church matters and for the laity in so far as Christ's words itself refers to it. Many things in the Old Testament may have a downright immoral effect.

Concerning the fear that the Bible I mean, that is the New Testament, might easily be variously interpreted and understood by the laity : that concern is justified. When even theologians, bishops and fathers of the Church have variously explained and interpreted Holy Scripture, or parts of it, is it possible that that should not possibly happen to the laity. The Bible, like every other great and profound book, will be understood according to individual capacity, rank, age and temperament in various ways. And we cannot go for advice to the theologians, because their conceptions also differ from one another. When has a man ever understood the Bible wholly ? The inexhaustible source out of which flows at all times so much religious life lies in the deep mysticism of this Book.

The various interpretations and explanations do not instigate anything bad ; on the contrary, rather are they vivifying. In Protestant countries there are many readers of the Bible, each one finding in the book what he wants and accepting it as he can understand



it, as it has the best effect on the life of his soul. Every one tries to harmonize the Gospel with the noblest instincts of his being. Theologians may dispute, the believing laity does not do that, but lets the Word of God work on them immediately and innocently. We can certainly not say that the power of religion or morality or personal ability is less amongst believing Evangelicals! That too is a sign of the divinity of the Gospels, that it never has a bad effect, not even when—as the Scribes say—it is wrongly understood. Only a good, humble will must be there. The most important moral doctrine is so clearly and popularly put, that it cannot, or only through malicious sophism, be turned into the contrary. It is the Scribes and Pharisees that have twisted and misinterpreted the doctrine of Jesus, whilst simple-minded fishermen and shepherds received it immediately with the heart and carried it rightly into the practical life.

May I perhaps be allowed to speak of self? In reading the Bible I have never missed the want of Theological training. Without much dogmatic breaking of the head, I opened the book, and wherever I opened it light streamed out of it towards me. Thus this light taught, warned, comforted or chastized me. It is to be admitted that the Gospel has not always had the same effect on me, that in youth I conceived many things differently from my maturer years, during happy times differently from times of misfortune, that I was unable to comprehend some passage, yea, that



some passages even roused doubt and contradiction in me. And that too was light. For it was a spur to examine, and to wrestle for the spirit of God. It has the same effect ; if among the Bible reading laity it calls forth an exchange of opinion, it animates and develops a fruitful religious life free from sentimentality and religious show in the community. It is certain that among genuine Evangelicals there reigns less religious indifferentism than amongst Roman Catholics, where the individual has nothing to do but to be guided, and to obey.

I believe that a far more living and mutual interest would be developed between the laity and their spiritual advisers through the reading of the Bible, and that the Roman Catholic Church, as such, would gain and not lose by the unhampered liberty of the New Testament. The Church—if she is what she gives herself out to be—would herself be forced to assert as false the assumption that a leaning to the Gospels means a loosening of the ties to Rome.

Yes, she ought to do more, she should help to spread the Gospel, encourage the use of it, and especially to publish a Commentary for the reading of the Bible.

For Bible reading must be learnt and practised.

A man who opens the Bible for the first time—especially when unskilled in spiritual life—plainly does not know what to do with it. A few passages may indeed sound familiar to his ear, perhaps through a sermon, perhaps also in pleasant or unpleasant reminiscence of



long-past schooldays. Other passages seem to him absolutely dark and far-fetched, and he thinks he can better learn the life and doctrine of Christ in the extracts in an old school-book or book of devotion. Only gradually, by taking the Bible into his hands again and again will he find the unspeakable charm that lies in this strictly limited, compressed, solemn and yet so simple form. Then will there dawn upon him the sacredness of these ancient writings which have become a strength and a salvation through nearly two thousand years to many nations of the earth, of the documents which have become consecration in happiness and comfort in trial to thousands of millions of people. This book is a Last Will of the forefathers, an immovable lighthouse in the stormy seas of the ages and of races. To the Christian it is more.

The genuineness of the book, as well as the truthfulness of its translators cannot be doubted. Free descriptions of the life and doctrine of Christ, according to a personal opinion, or to that of a party, a sect, a Church, may easily lead away from the Gospel. Already the simple omission of a verse here and there often alters the meaning of the whole. But even in this case harm is seldom done because the subject blesses and raises to a higher place everything that treats of it. Yet there is a difference if the thirsty man drinks at the brook or at the source.

It is sometimes asked if the Bible agrees with the present standpoint of Natural History? Certainly



it does. Only we must not seek to know the mere letter, but rather the living spirit. Then all falls into unity and becomes divine—Knowledge and Faith, Earth and Heaven.

According to the present state of affairs there is a terribly wide chasm between the Gospel and the Roman Catholic Church. If we left the political side of the Church out of the question I should not think it impossible to bridge over this chasm. One would have to spiritualize the letter here and the form there ; and unification would lie in that spiritualization into the ideal, moral, blissful world, which we call the Kingdom of God. It would also be the road to the final Unification of all Christian Creeds. My Faith suffices to reach this glorious goal.

Meanwhile I strive for this Unity for myself. My standpoint in the Gospel does not hinder me from revering the Mother of Jesus, from consecrating commemoration days to the favourites of the Saviour, and also to Himself, from discussing things with a wise spiritual adviser when my conscience is in doubt, from assisting at mass in memory of the Last Supper and the Sacrifice on the Cross, etc. And on the other hand this catholic frame of mind does not hinder me from helping to build a Church for a poor Evangelical Community.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this occasion be it expressly noticed that I assisted in the erecting of an Evangelical Church in Mürzzuschlag only from human and religious motives, and for no other



And if some one says, Thou canst not serve two masters, I answer : Nor do I serve them. I serve neither the Protestant nor the Roman Catholic Church. I seek with heart's joy only to serve Him for whom these Churches were founded, and that is for *One* only !

No, a man should not talk publicly of such intimate things. Even the merriest organ-grinder is easily charged with the odium of being pious if he confesses to be a friend of the Gospel. Yet he does not stand alone as such among worldly men, among the struggling hearts of our time. Educator and leader, the learned man and the poet, clamour for this remarkable book of strength and of blessing for themselves and for the nations.

Goethe himself, the great pagan, who surveyed the whole spiritual world of the earth, said : " Let mental culture progress more and more, let science grow in depth and width, let the mind of man expand as it will—the grandeur and ethical culture of Christianity as it shines in the Gospels will ever be acknowledged.

reason. National concerns touch me near enough, yet they cannot, according to my opinion, be mixed up with religion. or only in so far as we desire to have divine services in the mother tongue.



## Chapter XIII

### BELIEF IN THE DEVIL

**M**OST terrifying pictures are to be seen in our shop-windows at the time of St. Nicholas.<sup>1</sup> A blood-red fellow, of the size of a grown man squats against a black background. He has dishevelled black hair out of which grow a couple of large goats' horns, black eyebrows from under which stare a couple of squinting eyes. A narrow jagged nose and in the grinning mouth a few pointed teeth which, as may well be seen, are greedy for human flesh. On the back he has gigantic, spread-out bat-wings, also blood-red. In one of his claws the terrible creature holds the end of a hanging chain, with the other he touches a basket filled with apples, nuts and other dainties. In spite of the latter the fellow is so abominable that the police are very near confiscating him, since they have already confiscated better things.

I took this chap for the stop-gap of St. Nicholas. The holy Bishop himself no longer cares to come, times are too bad for him, the people too depraved, even the children; he therefore prefers sending the "Bartel" the "Father Christmas," the "Krampus."

<sup>1</sup> Dec. 6.



That is quite as it should be. The old gentleman is not to be blamed if he thinks twice before going amongst the people in winter time, who after all no longer believe in anything. Many children pretend to be believers when they think they will get something, otherwise there exists for them no St. Nicholas, Christ-child, no patron saint throughout the year. And if under such circumstances the "Krampus" assumes as martial an exterior as possible, yea, even plays the "devil" himself, it is easily understood.

A great majority of our people picture to themselves that evilly renowned personage the devil, exactly in the way he is represented in the shop-windows, only that he probably has also fiery eyes and flaming breath, and spits fire as often as he breathes. Besides, he has mangy cat's ears, with which he hears the most secret thoughts. He has also a long tail, which he winds round the necks of the poor sinners, dragging as by a rope into hell. And he has goat's feet, out of the footprints of which rises stinking smoke. Now, it is to be asked, how do the people come by such a tragi-comic notion of the devil? There may be much in it from darkest heathendom. The devil is one of those world-tramps who stroll through the myths of the nations under different names.

He was not always so black as he is painted. With the old Hebrews he was a spirit subservient to Jehovah. He had permission from God to prove mankind, to try how far their piety went, if it was genuine and



strong, or not. He owes his present shape to the Roman Catholic Church, at first on the basis of the doctrine of Christ that Good is opposed to Evil, heaven to hell, and in a later shape, perhaps, as shown above, the Heavenly Father is contrasted with the Prince of Hell with crown and fiery fork. The devil had his best times in the Middle Ages. Then he was of more importance than God. The fear of the devil has done incomparably more than the love of God.

In those days certainly the people were made of other stuff than now; they were still half savage, rude, possessed by the notions of paganism; in those days it was a question of taming them, and for that purpose the devil was useful. The devil has certainly driven numberless souls into the Church. But has he driven them to Christianity, which means that evil is not to be avoided from fear of punishment, nor good done in consideration of reward? Such a high ethical standpoint could not be demanded from those rude nations. To-day the Christian idea prevails, at least in theory, that evil is to be shunned for its own sake and good to be sought for itself as the Kingdom of God. To-day, the devil in his mediaeval shape no longer fits; he is more harmful than useful because he stands in the way of humanism, and is scorned by the people. A clean sweep ought to have been made of this figure long ago, instead of painting it again and again on the wall for the people.

Or am I in the wrong? Does the fear of the devil



more than the love of God still deter men from immorality, robbing and murdering, ? It may be so ; for the beast still reigns in so many people. It would be a doubtful action to profane the devil and to divest him of his terrors for such people. But in that case the chapter of the devil belongs to the Penal Code and not to Christianity. The more morally constituted men, the seekers after God, ought to be permitted to put away the caricature of the devil, and to consider it merely an historical necessary evil. Then I should even like to do away with the devil ? It would be no loss. It is said that that faith should be left untouched to the poor people since it makes them happy. I declare, on the contrary, that the belief in God should be left untouched not only to the poor, but also to the rich—as well as to the powerful and learned. That happiness is good for all. But can the belief in a devil make people happy too ? Does not this fearful monster create hell rather than the Kingdom of Heaven in the souls of men, even in those of the righteous amongst the people ? I could say a good deal about that. If they confiscated the devil in the shop windows they should at the same time remove the whole mediaeval devil.

To do away with the devil altogether would not do, I am sorry to say. He exists, really exists, but in a very different form from the mediaeval devil. The fact is that when there is a quintessence of good there must also be a quintessence of evil.



What does Jesus say of the Kingdom of Heaven ? That it is in ourselves. Similarly there can and must be also a hell in ourselves, as soon as we lack the Kingdom of Heaven—Hell with all its devils, by which is to be understood nothing but our errors, weaknesses, our disposition to sin and vice. Alas ! how old and matter of course is the truism ! And how dangerous are these devils, how false, how terrible, in one respect incomparably worse than the mediaeval devils who could be driven away with holy water, exorcised with incantations. While men outwardly struggled with the devil and thought him vanquished, he sat comfortably in the heart, devouring the soul. Already the fear of the devil was a devil in itself, and the crazy fancy to have vanquished him was again a separate devil.

There is nothing to be said against a desire to personify the idea of evil. Nor is it prohibited to represent human evil in the shape of a human monster with horns and tail. But to believe in this image, as if it was a real person, would only mean to withdraw one's attention from the devils in our heart.

When the Evangelist relates how Jesus himself was even tempted by the devil, that is only the ancient image-representation, which makes us see the tempter in a person, whilst according to the spirit of Christ's doctrine it is quite certain that the biographer speaks of the inner temptation, of the revolt of the flesh against spirituality, against the sovereignty of the



spirit. Although Christ's doctrine is purely spiritual, it does not despise symbols in order to be understood by material mankind. Because humanity is not only material but also childish, it has taken these things literally and has seen reality in the symbol. That has often been fatal, and thus we have come to a corporeal devil, which causes us all sorts of pain, which does not redeem us.

That this one or that one has seen the devil, is a common story amongst the people—especially in the backwoods. We seldom hear that God ever appeared to any one. We seem to be far away from the latter, but to live on a confidential footing with the former. At the beginning of the twentieth century there still exist a people among the hollows of the mountains who can make use of the devil! They would like best of all to sign away to him their bit of soul with a few drops of blood in the hope that the devil might become recognizable to them. They are not as exacting as Faust of old; a hatful of dollars is at most the climax of their wishes. But the devil does not provide even that. If God leaves the childish wishes of the people unfulfilled, it is said at once: There is no God. That there is no devil is heard much more rarely, although the latter never comes up to his obligations.



## Chapter XIV

### THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

**H**OW can simple folk, incapable of abstract thought let alone of representing to themselves an idea that goes against all reality and experience, understand that God guides and protects each one individually of many hundreds of millions of human beings? God is represented to them on the one side as a person resembling a man, on the other as something which is omnipresent, endowed with the highest qualities of a real, corporeal being, and who is yet invisible. And this God, who has the universe and Heaven under His care shall also look after each individual human being as if He existed for its sake alone, as if he had to lavish His care only on this one man! How should a childlike human mind come to a clear understanding of that? And the people is a child.

Nobody knows that better than the Roman Catholic Church; she treats the people as a child is treated. She turns the spiritual into the material, so that the people can see, hear, feel and believe it. So the Church took over the guardian angel from the old Jewish Religion, and placed him as a material figure in the Christian circle.



According to the Church teaching each man has his especial guardian angel sent to him by God as protector and guide in all dangers of body and soul. Therefore, the people imagine, the angel is furnished by God with power, goodness and wisdom ; he is, so to speak, the personal representative of God, the divine advocate of helpless man in this barren, dark, hostile world.

The guardian angel is represented as a youth in a long white garment, with long curls and great white wings. The pictures, everywhere familiar among Roman Catholic folk, show the guardian angel, as he stands behind the cradle of the child, holding his hand protectingly over it ; as he guides a boy across a narrow plank across an abyss ; as he guides a guileless child gathering flowers over writhing snakes ; as he holds a palm protectingly over a persecuted fugitive. On the tablets for martyrs the guardian angel stands in the background of the man menaced with danger and death. Many a chapel, many a roadside Calvary, is dedicated to the guardian angel, and the Church celebrates once a year the feast of the guardian angels.

The prayers to the holy guardian angel are numerous, and the faithful consecrate their first thought in the morning to their guardian angel :

Holy Guardian Angel mine,  
I implore thee, guard me well  
All the day and all the hours,  
Till my soul to Heaven goes.



or :

Oh, holy Guardian Angel mine,  
I implore thee, guard me well ;  
Stand by me in all my needs,  
And from sinning keep me free.  
By day and by night I pray of thee,  
Shelter and guard over me.

Few Roman Catholic mothers omit to kneel down at night by their child's cot, folding the little one's hands and making him recite the little verse :

In God's name to sleep.  
Six Angels will guard me :  
Two at the head, two at the feet,  
Two at the side.  
Our dear Lady will also be with them.

A guileless child who neither knows danger nor is able to avoid it, requires, according to the popular idea, more than one guardian angel, he needs six of them. And that children have their guardian angels always comes into my mind when I see a child climb the roof, or play with fire, or handle sharp implements, or jump over the brook, or run about amongst half-wild cattle, or play with ill-natured dogs, things from which adults carefully keep aloof. It is a fact that many animals treat defenceless children more kindly than adults armed with sticks and whips.

A mother dismisses her children in the morning in order to trust them during the day to a treacherous world full of danger. Then she says to the school-child : "Pray diligently to the holy guardian angel,



that nothing happens to you on the way ! ” And to the half-grown-up daughter going into a mill : “ Don’t forget the guardian angel, my child, that he may shield you from sin and temptation ! ” And to the grown-up son who has to go down the mine : “ Do not forget when you descend, to recommend body and soul to the holy guardian angel. I, too, will pray to him for you.” And even to her husband when he goes anxiously to the severe employer, or to those in authority, or has otherwise to undergo anxiety, she calls out : “ The holy guardian angel will accompany you, so that all may go well ! ”

The guardian angel stands by the bedside of the sick. When death comes, the guardian angel is imagined as a cherub with the flaming sword. For now the “ foul fiend ” the devil, sneaks round to catch the departing soul. The angel warns him off. The devil uses all sorts of ruses to approach the dying man, to get hold of his soul. Then the angel strikes out with his long wings, so that the lighted candles flutter, and wrestles with the devil, to tear the poor soul from him. The devil has a balance and throws the sins of the dying man into the one end ; it sinks down heavily. The angel searches out the virtues and merits of the dying man, puts them into the other end. It does not move it. He adds the good works of the relations, the prayers, the alms given, the exercises of repentance—but the good side of the balance remains high in the air. The devil triumphs. Now the angel raises a



golden cup and lets a drop fall from it into the balance—it is a drop of blood from the Cross of Christ. The good side of the balance sinks heavily and deeply, the other side with the sins jumps up so sharply that the sins are flung into the face of the devil. He disappears with horrible groans, and the angel has won the human soul.

As a child I pictured to myself the occurrences by the deathbed as something like this. I do not think that this sprang from my fancy, I must at one time or another have heard this description from others, so that it doubtless originated in the popular source of belief.

When then the dead man is placed on the bier, it is customary, amongst the peasant folk, to cover his breast with little pictures of saints. Amongst them would be the patron saint of the deceased, the helper of the dying St. Joseph and St. Barbara, and also the picture of the guardian angel—whose daily task is now done. What becomes of such an angel after he has happily delivered his charge back into God's hand nothing can be learnt. If he undertakes another child of the earth, or if he, like an impertinent fancy-monger has supposed, is given to his charge in Heaven as a valet—to decide it would take a schoolman.

The guardian angel would most likely act with a higher insight and a wiser guidance than the human. There was once an Alpine tourist who united with his love of the sport a very noble characteristic. Where-



ever he found poor people in the mountains, he was charitable and showed them kindness. He supplied the means of instruction to poor schools in far-away mountain villages, gave Christmas trees at Christmas to poor children. Touched by such loving services, I wrote a letter to the man one day, in which he was especially thanked for what he did for poor, otherwise forsaken children, and the letter concluded with the words : " When the solitary tourist climbs a dangerous precipice, the guardian angel of a poor child he has made happy will hover over him in faithful guardianship ! " A few days after, when the man was in the midst of preparations for a poor children's Christmas tree, he made a climbing expedition, and he fell and was killed. It was certainly a death without pain and torment and consciousness of dying, a friend of nature could not wish a better death. The guardian angel did not yield to the shortsighted human desire—yet he surely did better than we could intend or imagine. Sometimes Providence shields man best in not shielding him.

We should not like to be without corporeal forms of our moods, presentiments, longings and wishes—they not only satisfy artistic needs, but strengthen spiritual power in a simple mind. But, it has its drawbacks. The ideas of the mind gradually become entities, which are as real as anything real can be, and they become so powerful and aggressive, that they take possession of the whole man and suffer



nothing besides. So these gentle spirits turn into demons, which ever veil the good and the true more thickly, and lead men into darkest errors. This is the danger with so many of the symbols of faith.

There are persons with whom the guardian angel plays a greater rôle than God. They do not think that he is only the ambassador of God, who may be recalled any day; they attribute to him all the qualities of God, except perhaps justice. They expect their guardian angel to be a good comrade in any emergency, even when they desire anything bad, even when they are in the wrong. There are thieves who call upon their guardian angel before commencing a burglary on a dark night. Many a one who pockets his knife with the intention to pick a quarrel with a rival at the Church festival calls on his guardian angel. And somebody knew of a young dairymaid who allowed her lover to come week after week to the hut. And, when the consequences could no longer be concealed, she wept and said, "her guardian angel had forsaken her."

Many years ago, in my forest home, a peasant's wife, after much suffering, brought a sickly child into the world. She sent it at once through godmother and midwife to the parish church to be baptized, three miles distant. "Oh, poor little one," she said, bidding it good-bye, "before baptism thou hast no guardian angel. That nothing happen to thee on the way, I will send my guardian angel with thee."



When the child returned from baptism the mother was dead. "Because she sent away her guardian angel," said the women.

So are the people. They grope along the dark road of life like sleep-walkers. And yet none goes wrong for whom shines the red light of love.



## Chapter XV

### THOUGHTS IN SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

SOCIAL man hovers between two dangers: to suffer wrong, or to inflict it. Conflicts which may lacerate the heart of a man striving after justice arise from those two dangers.

The greatest sufferings of my life have sprung from this.

I have suffered wrong. I little felt it in matters corporeal or in matters of fact. I cannot remember ever to have been corporeally maltreated; neither as a cowherd, a schoolboy, nor an apprentice, and if a blow or anything of the sort had actually been dealt me, it is quite certain that it would have hurt me more in the soul than in the body. In worldly affairs, I may have been sometimes imposed upon, often I did not notice it, and if I did, I did not bother about it. There lay no great suffering in it for me. I do not greatly complain because that wrong has been done me.

I am much more sensitive in another direction. When I am *morally* wronged, be it a malicious blow against my personal honour, be it an intentional, ill-natured twisting of my opinions and aims, a suggesting of selfish motives, then my nature rises against



it. Sometimes I ask it then, this outraged nature : Why revolt ? If you feel yourself right and strong, let them do what they will, nothing can happen to you. Thereupon, I indignantly respond : I am no saint, I am nature. Yes, certainly, nature with a passionate heart. But if the heart will not allow itself to be touched in its greatest property, in its ideal self, then it becomes self-loving, perhaps also a little vain. Weak humanity cannot be blamed for that, especially if he strives to become gradually stronger. That growth is a peculiar thing ; we get older, more delicate, more nervous, and the soul is expected to grow stronger ! I think it certainly possible that an old, weak, sick person can acquire a heart hard as steel, but is that a goal devoutly to be wished ? I do not want to gain hardness of heart, but rather peace of heart. Meanwhile, I do not possess it, and therefore, the moral wrong I suffer stirs up a rebellion. A sorrow inflicted with intention hurts doubly ; it hurts as a wound and it hurts as a wrong. A violent feeling of wrath, hatred, yea, revenge against the offender storms through my whole being, and in this state I am always in great danger of doing wrong. My pen becomes terribly like a sword ! It is often real good luck that the post does not leave every hour, that there is a stove in my room. The letter was written in the heat of passion, with fever-throbbing brow, with winged desire to strike the adversary to the heart, to hurt him, to punish him in his own being for what he



has done to me. Having calmed myself by writing, the Alpine lake becomes more tranquil, and soon mirrors again the stars of the sky. The letter is torn into a thousand pieces and thrown into the stove. I cannot hate longer than an hour, then comes the reaction and my foe appears more loveable—at least, more needful of love than one who has never harmed me. And so it can happen that I may to-day defend the opponent against whom I yesterday lodged a complaint. Men, who are much ruled by the spiritual powers—like the poet—are inconsistent in such matters. I do not greatly mind that reproach.

The feeling of hatred is much worse in its consequences, it almost regularly turns the suffering of wrong into the doing of wrong. The best is, when calm reason can take possession of the affair, weighing the care with the care of the trader weighing saffron, and giving its opinion impartially. But that must be done mostly by a third person. The disputants cannot be the arbitrators. He who has the spear in his breast will not stop to seek the motive that caused the spear to be hurled. He will only give a harsh cry of pain and endeavour to pull the weapon out of the wound and to hurl it back upon the aggressor with a curse.

Those who wrestle against each other in ardent passion, are the poorest of the poor. Many a night under the weight of some enmity I have wept over myself and over my adversary. But when the mourning rose



again to wrath, then sometimes the mischief increased also. A hundred kinds of projects of revenge rose, a hundred possibilities of harming and annihilating the enemy. And what is the end? That one wrong breeds another. The only redemption out of such a conflict is—pardon, silence and oblivion. A decent man can afford to let much abuse settle on him without hurt to himself.

No state is more dreadful than the recognition that we have caused evil to others and see no possibility of reparation. A deeply wronged heart is child's grief, but a bad conscience is damnation. While everything round you lies in peaceful sleep you turn restlessly on your couch from one side to the other. You call up one fancy after the other, but none excuses you, and your own thoughts are your adversaries. In the morning you get up with a heavy head and a bitter palate, as if you were ill, and so you are. And not any sooner will you be well, and not any sooner will you recover your peace of mind, until you have done your utmost to make up for the wrong you did to another.

The Russian poet, Tolstoy, sees in the Christian commandment to love your enemy the extreme consequence that we should never resist an enemy, endure everything from him without defence; in this way the adversary would soonest tire of his animosity. Looked at more closely Tolstoy is not in the right. You have opponents without the least fault of yours,



and there exist natural aversions. You believe, when suffering the first wrong patiently, without resistance, the aggressor will be generous and leave you alone in the future. Quite the contrary; when the ill-willed adversary knows that you allow yourself to be killed tranquilly, he just kills you.

I mean that to do wrong is sin, but to suffer wrong may be sin also. For through the latter we may favour and encourage wrong, and in the course of time all those who do not resist would be extirpated, the violators alone would endure, and it would finally come to the Nietzschean doctrine, namely, that only the strong and the reckless had the right to be masters of the world.

When historical humanity was two thousand years old, a man rose who founded the religion of desire for the world. This religion taught the advantage of the one chosen people, the increase and expansion of this people, the conquest of foreign tribes, earthly power and the appropriation of the riches of this world! That is the religion of Moses.

After four thousand years of history a man rose who founded the religion of contempt for the world. This religion acknowledges the vanity of the earthly, teaches how to help oneself and one's fellow-men patiently and lovingly through the trial of this world and to obtain indestructible happiness in the spirit. That is the religion of Christ.



And when these epochs of history are fulfilled, will there not arise a man who will found the religion of World-Negation? This religion will teach very quickly the world and the whole of mankind to annihilate itself.

How much sin and suffering there is at this moment on earth! How many human beings are tormented, how many animals tortured! How much misery in the homes of the poor, how much suffering in hospitals, how much despair in prisons, how many cursings of the roofless and the homeless! If now a voice spoke to you who rejoice in a quiet, peaceful home: "You can quench all the burning heartache of mankind with your heart's blood, open your veins!" would you do it? You answer: "Wherefore this question? My suffering could alleviate that of others!" But you agreed with the philosopher who asserted that the world existed only in your idea! If that is so, then break the apparatus of your idea and with it you do away with all the pain in the world.

I presume that humanity, taken as a whole, like one person, in the course of time, must live through all the characters of its individuals. Thus we have the epochs of the humane, the brutal, the ascetic, the evil-doer, the dreamer, the energetic, the simpleton, the hypocrite, etc. Each human character, as we find it in the individual, has its century, in which it



becomes universal and ruling. And as a person out-lives himself, a certain spirit exhausts itself, so the spirit of the time exhausts itself, to make room for another.

Perhaps at no time was the selfishness of the individual as great as to-day, and also the desire of rising higher in the social scale, and at no time was there more general talk about forms of governments in which the individual means nothing, the whole all. How is it possible that modern man, who cares only for his own advantage, who can only see the progress of the whole in the free development of his personality, who only knows the maxim "The State for me," should in a 'twinkling accept the maxim "I for the State"

Humanity sickens with discord, and I fear that this disease will cause it to perish.

As far back as men's thoughts complaints are heard of the perverseness of the world. If the world was always "perverse," this perversity is probably its natural position. But how then can we speak of perversity?

Good Fortune, it is asserted, is round. I believe it is much more likely shaped like a heart. The wheel of Chance may roll as it likes, a heartless man has no talent for happiness.



Forget what thou hast,  
Remember what thou art,  
Take Heaven as thou may'st—  
And the earth, as it is.

Many educators are fond of repeating to the child continually : Child, all you have, and enjoy, food, clothes, shelter, language, school, laws, etc., you owe to others, therefore you cannot be grateful enough. Is that always good ? Does that tend to the development of a manly, self-reliant character ?

Would not a brave man be oppressed by the idea that he was a receiver of gifts, tolerated amongst men. Yet he shall not forget to be grateful. Yea, just for that, that others willingly admit our right and respect it, for that we ought to be grateful.

The Cross is the sign of the unity of the world, represented by a line crossed by a line.

Unfortunately, it often seems to me that I do not know repentance. All the wrong I have done has had its cause, and under the same causes I should do it again.

I dare not judge the so-called "wicked ;" I believe they would not be wicked if they were happy. I see it in myself, it is only when I feel happy that I like to be good to others, and that I am so easily ; if



I experience evil from the world, I am discontented, and too easily become hard-hearted and harsh.

With the poor I recognize the blessing of money, with the rich its curse.

The philosophers came each one with a special theoretical God ; a few even proved Him mathematically. A God who has to be proved is of no use to me.

If any one should say to me : " Behold, there is God, there He is ! " and I do not see Him, then for the first time doubt comes to me. I must be able to picture Him as something to be grasped by the senses.

The thought of God is not for the Universe, it is for us men and must have a symbol ; " too ethereal a God easily evaporates," a jesting tongue once said.

We may love the world, we may hope for Heaven, we must believe in God. God can do without everything except faith in Him.

If, my dear N., you assure an uneducated person to-day : " It is not to be proved scientifically that there is a God," he goes to-morrow to his neighbour and says : " Mr. N. has assured me that there is no God."

In spite of our artificially acquired education and culture, in extraordinary situations of life we fall back at once into the natural state. When the mind is



highly excited, when dangers and various diseases, etc., are threatening, man becomes entirely natural, and the master-mind is hardly to be distinguished from the charcoal-burner.

There are people who say as follows : " Away with doctrines that promise us happiness in another world ; we wish to be happy in this world." Quite right, let every one be as happy as possible. Now, however, there are people who can only be happy in this world if they hope for some good in the next. Should it be made more difficult for the latter to be happy ?

It is said, that Christianity does not lay enough stress on the love of animals. Yet the holy Christ took up His abode first with the animals—with the ox and the ass, and they warmed the babe with their breath. Is it possible that the deep meaning of this myth is misunderstood by Christianity itself ?

Many a man's heart is overlaid with a crust of ice which only melts when burning coals are heaped on his head.

TRUTH.

Oh, thou seeker after Truth,  
Ask not where it lies ?  
Thou hast it not, thou gain'st it not,  
For Thou thyself art Truth.



## Chapter XVI

### HUMILITY

THE oldest myth of mankind is a fiery warning against disobedience and pride. How trivial it sounds, and how profound it is: Disobedience drove man from Paradise. Pride hurled the angels from Heaven. Pride leads to humiliation. Humility to Perfection. History tells it when the aggressors have obtained—for others misery, murder and slavery, for themselves perdition. The proud man pledges his whole strength, his life, in order to rule; he sacrifices everything to his greed for rule, and yet he does not rule. It is a mad fancy if any one believes he rules! We are all ruled, the least by a narrow circle, the great by the world. And the elephant by a midge. The general thinks he leads armies, a single stone from a roof smashes his head. He thinks he conquers lands and countries, and is the personal slave of abominable vices, which drag him like mocking spirits into the abyss. And his enslaved nation! It is a people gnashing its teeth and cursing, a people of foes, and in a short space of time his most brilliant victories become shameful defeats. It is the most important office of the executioner in the history of the world to



humble the proud. But this enforced humility is none, it is only contempt. I see no tragedy in the ruin of the proud, rather the glad work of justice.

What has been done that is great and lasting is not done by pride. Humility brought men together, because one alone saw that he was too weak. Humility founded Society, because it became clear to men that they could only exist in a community. Humility made men benevolent, charitable and indulgent to each other because they saw that they needed indulgence and kindness themselves. Humility redeemed the world, when Christ gave the example that one man must sacrifice himself for the other.

All religion, all bliss and joy of heart is founded on humility.

Man is such that he may not seek his salvation in justice but in grace. Do you know, my friend, what prayer is? Perhaps you wish to rid yourself of it. Who prays to-day? Gently, freethinker, you pray! You pray, without knowing it—or wanting to do it. Every humble thought is a prayer. In what lies the essence of prayer except in humility! In the self acknowledgment of our own importance, need of help, in the recognition of a higher power, which can give us grace and help us. That prayer gives comfort to him who prays faithfully, is not only assured by religion, but also confirmed by psychologists.

Whence comes comfort to him who prays? Out of the words he says? No, it comes out of the feeling



of humility, of pity for oneself. In the feeling that he is to be pitied he pities others, and hopes that a higher kindly power will show pity to him.

Would he promise himself anything from a prayer running perhaps thus :

“Lord God ! I come in order to remind you of your duty. You have put me into this miserable world without my knowledge and against my will, and I feel myself far too good for it. Out of the misery into which I have chanced to come through no fault of mine, and through your clumsiness, you must now deliver me as my right if you can, unless you are after all more insignificant than myself. I claim to obtain all the necessary and good things due to me in consequence of my existence.”

Such a “prayer” would hardly produce consolation, comfort and edification, but rather bitterness and despair. But it would be balsam to a sad heart if you harbour the following thoughts in your forsaken condition :

“Eternal Lord and God ! Thou art ! O Lord, Thou art, that I know, I see it in myself and in all beings, and all events as far as my senses reach. How Thou art, that I do not know, for Thou art great above all human imagination and I am so small and so poor. But I am a part of Thyself, and therefore I cannot be lost, therefore I may feel myself one with Thee, therefore I may consecrate my sorrows which help towards my purification



to Thee, therefore I may pray for Your mercy, for all the weaknesses and going astray to which man has fallen a prey, according to Your inscrutable decision. I could not fear any anxiety, if I did not know Thee above me, Thou Almighty Father. It is certain that in Thy great world a single being like myself means nothing, yet I must be in the design of the whole, and pass away and be again, but Thou art the great kind heart, which will be gracious to every single creature, and therefore I pray Thee for all and each Your infinite kindness, be my support and helper."

Who can pray like this? Only the meek. He who can pray thus is to be called blessed, that a part of expiation lies in humility. Our law also says: A repentant criminal gets milder punishment than a stubborn, hardened one. In the confessional of the Roman Catholic Church forgiveness depends chiefly on humility; humility is by no means as humiliating as is supposed—its ladder is an ascending one, while pride, as the wise of old said, leads to a fall.

Humility conceals moral dangers, but they may be overcome by humility itself if it is of the right kind.

Is the humble man to suffer wrong without defending himself? By doing so he will not lessen but rather increase his inmost worth. But if he opposes wrong he does not do so out of personal aggressiveness, but rather from a sense of justice.

Humility must not be mistaken for fawning; the consciousness of self, the joy in merit is not excluded.



Humility need not always bend itself before men, but it must be such that you do not claim as personal merit what you are and can do, but as a gift of destiny, as a grace of Heaven, as a talent which you have not acquired like a piece of money, which was not given to you either to dispose of as you like and without consideration, but which has only been granted you in order that you may achieve some good with it under the guidance of your good will which is your only merit. This loan can be taken from you to-day or to-morrow. The human race as a whole has certainly cause to be a little proud of itself, and will, it is hoped, come to something ; but the individual is so wretched, so unreliable and so perishable, that it seems quite incomprehensible how its body can rise, can blow out its windbag, can bluster and boast of qualities and services rendered, which sprang not so much out of personal ability as out of strange conditions and influences.

One who is nothing and can do nothing would, according to my opinion, have much more cause for defiance and opposition against a destiny which denied him all than the other who has been so favoured. The latter ought to be constantly grateful and try continually to show himself worthy of the gifts. It is easier for the great and important man to be humble ; for him humility and simplicity are an ornament ; with the lowly it might be considered fawning. We read of a master mind who was famous through the



whole educated world ; whoever approached him did so with deference, and whom did he find ? An ordinary looking, almost timid man, who agreed with his visitor, not to say submitted to him. If his visitor was a highly gifted person, then the great man showed himself in his whole nature, which never opposed, but contained to build up. If the visitor was insignificant, then the great man was the same, and did not step out of himself. So it happened that he appeared in company just as commonplace, unintellectual and insignificant as any Philistine. He gave to each one what he already had, and was considered not only a genial but also an amiable man—and he did not compromise himself.

The humble man does not feel himself a completed unity, with which the world has to reckon ; he ranges himself rather on the side of the whole or submits to it ; he knows he is nothing as an individual, but strong and imperishable as a part of the whole. A chief sign of humility is faithfulness. He will not only love the evil which his ancestors have tilled, he will also gratefully love his horse which has carried him to victory. The humble man can give a soul to all, and is grateful to every creature. He lives a deep inner life, which is incomparably richer in treasures and happiness than all the outward splendour of the mighty.

Humility is of the highest value because, in creating inner peace, she is the origin of many virtues. I have mentioned gratitude and amiability ; benevolence is



still to be named ; modesty, simplicity, innocence, gaiety—are all children of humility. Modesty is not humility certainly, it is an amiable quality, but it is not an ethical trait of character. Modesty is shown outwardly, it expresses itself in its bearing towards our fellow creatures, in contentment with little earthly wealth. Humility is an inner essence, so to speak, the modest bearing of man towards his God. Pride is always contradictory, pessimistic, critical, therefore not creative. Humility is the opposite. Humility is strong, it unconsciously builds up greater things than pride is able to pull down with the best will. Humility is unconquerable. He who has placed his desire on nothing, from him can nothing be taken. Humility liberates ; by limiting itself it prevents the danger of being limited by others. Pride can easily be brought to nought, humility never ; except it be a false humility, only assumed for obtaining happiness and honour. There are people who always look on the ground when any one praises them, but at once begin to praise themselves if no one else does it. True humility is as imperishable as adamant.

Each one should say, "I will be meek," but nobody can say "I am meek," for if he says so he is no longer meek. As there are people who possess an intrusive modesty, and become burdensome and immodest with over-modesty, so the apparently meek can fall a prey to Pharisean pride, which, because coupled with hypocrisy, is the worst of prides. True humility



always produces the feeling of being far too little resigned and humble in comparison to what we are, and what we can accomplish in contrast with an infinite divine greatness.

Because humility harmonizes with resignation it brings peace of heart. It will be creative in the desire to render as much service as possible, so as not to be quite a parasite on God's earth. For in humility lies the noblest pride ; in it lies quiet modesty and calm manliness, the readiness to serve and the chaste veiling of the inner worth—in short what is called simplicity. Humility will be resigned if hopes and plans come to nought, and will seek in the narrow circle of diffidence the place of rest which he who calls himself Lord of the Earth never finds.

Humility is a stranger in our time, for the age considers haughtily how far it has advanced. Besides money it only knows the ideal—honour ; yet not the honour of natural capability and moral integrity, but rather that outward honour, which every street arab can destroy and which can probably be carved out again with the sword. This honour, this outward consideration is merely pride. And because pride makes a false picture which we can never reach—for ambition is as insatiable as avarice—so pride destroys our peace, and makes us sceptical pessimistic, despondent, stupid, and the last link of this devil's chain is despair. It may be seen all too clearly : our age is not only above measure haughty, it is also restless and dissatisfied.



The proud spirits have been hurled from Heaven. That myth is full of meaning for all times. If our haughty spirit continues to move in that direction on the day on which the world is vanquished by technical perfection mankind will commit suicide through a last great invention. But not out of humility, as if it felt itself unworthy to live, but out of disappointment, a final acknowledgment that all its proud strivings and proud strength have destroyed peace in human hearts and torn God's letter of grace to shreds.



## Chapter XVII

### HALF-WAY

ONE evening at a dinner party of serious men the conversation turned on the usefulness of the Gospels in the world. Several of those present held that Christian doctrine did not alone guarantee eternal salvation, but also earthly happiness, peace in human society, the prosperity of each single individual.

There was one who denied this. "If every one lived according to Christian doctrine," he said, "then perhaps I admit that it can lead to happiness on earth. It is different if only a few live in accordance with it. For them it is not of advantage, rather is the individual ruined through it. Supposing it were possible to follow that elevated doctrine in its whole rigour, it would make man absolutely incapable of the tasks and aspirations of modern society, would even—if misunderstood—lead to aberrations and bye-paths, of which I can relate an example from life."

Thereupon said another : "If you know an example that the following of Christian teaching leads to wrong paths, I know a hundred, yea thousands, of examples that not following it leads to destruction."

"Well, that goes without saying," said several, "and



has been proved long ago. Yet it might be interesting to hear the exception, if the other would tell them."

He began : " As it is not to be feared that the fate of the hero of my story can more estrange any of us from the Christian doctrine than, as far as we know, is already the case, and because none of us will probably go in as literally for the Sermon on the Mount as my Herr Eberhard did, I may perhaps be permitted to tell the tale without contradiction. The moral, if one is desired, would be the following : The individual went to destruction through following the Christian doctrine, because the others did not follow it also."

And thereupon he began : " In the little country town of K—— lived a young bookseller's assistant called Eberhard Roland. He had immigrated a few years ago from a neighbouring place after having buried his mother and his sister there. They had been his only relations, he had helped them courageously in their sufferings. The Rolands had once been a respected burgher-family and had then been visited by an immense misfortune. One of the Rolands had been condemned to death on account of a terrible deed of violence and had been hanged. That was the grandfather of this Eberhard. From that time the family had gone down-hill—it was dishonoured, avoided, despised. Business stood still, was wrecked, the family became poor, but maintained itself honestly though in dire poverty for many years. No one had anything to say against these industrious people,



but that a member of the family had been hanged remained unforgotten and was patent on every occasion. Eberhard's father had been a linen-weaver and had died young; the son had learnt bookbinding and had kept his mother and sister honestly and fairly by his trade, till both died in one week during an epidemic.

"From that time Eberhard lived in the town of K—— where he rose from a bookbinder to a bookseller, after having tried in vain several other ways of earning his living. His was a restless mind, jumping to and fro in extremes. Of a rather meditative, even ecstatic temperament he entertained for a time the idea of entering a monastery, until he entered a bank as correspondent. In a short time he was an accountant and had saved a few hundred dollars. Then he rented a hay-shed in a suburb and began to trade in timber and coals. Soon known as a trustworthy business man his trade flourished, and the shed became a stately depôt to which were added larger warehouses, and the simple bookbinder became a respected merchant. But that was not all. Of handsome person and kindly manners, he won the only daughter of the banker in whose employ he had been, and became a well-to-do husband and householder. A year later a child came, and a great trump, he drew the chief number in a great state-lottery. Now he was at once a demi-millionaire, and did not know himself how it had all happened.

"But now a change gradually took place in him which he only noticed himself probably rather late.



Living once upon a time among poor people, he had been very pitiful, and though he had not been able to do much for the suffering, he always had a warm heart for them, and his word of sympathy consoled many sufferers more than a gift in the hand. But in proportion as Herr Eberhard became wealthy, his heart cooled towards the poor. He was charitable, it is true, gave alms, yet less from an inner feeling than because he felt himself obliged to do so as a rich man. To see poverty before him was disagreeable to him, and sometimes it seemed to him a taint which clings to the frivolous or careless. Once upon a time he would have liked to feed the hungry beggar, without requiring to know why he had to suffer hunger, now Herr Eberhard always asked: 'Why do you not work? What have you done that you have fallen so low?'

"Formerly in his scanty leisure he had felt very comfortable and cosy in his little room with the few pieces of wooden furniture and the little pictures of mother and sister on the wall. Now in his richly furnished rooms he was displeased, now with this, now with that, and his wishes and needs were ever a little in advance of realities. Sometimes he felt the burden of wealth, the burden of the duties attached to it, then again it seemed to him as if he made too little use of his strength, his credit, his circumstances, and as if it were his task to become still richer—as rich as it is possible for a human being to be. He therefore allowed himself only little rest, calculated, planned new enterprises,



and when at the end of the year he balanced his accounts, as far as it could be done with his extensive possessions and affairs, he saw with an ever joyful terror how quickly millions grow. Nevertheless he continued to ask himself why they did not grow even quicker—what was the cause of it? When in such an hour he descended his carpeted stairs, the carriage awaiting him, to go to a philanthropical meeting, the form of a ragged beggar crouched at the gate shivering, with a sunken greenish face and glassy eye. He almost barred the road for the gentleman, and in an importunate way held out his mummified hand for alms.

“ ‘How is this?’ asked Herr Eberhard, angry with the impudent fellow, ‘Do I owe the creature anything? Poor? He smells of brandy, I think. Why don’t you work? Are you not ashamed to live on other people’s work? And impudent! Away, you disgust me; I shall give you nothing.’ With that he quickly entered his carriage, but before the footman shut the carriage-door, the beggar sank together and a stream of blood flowed from his mouth. He had given himself a deadly stab with a sharp knife.

“From that day Herr Eberhard’s wealth no longer increased. Not as if henceforth a curse rested on his house, but rather a blessing. Herr Eberhard decided to live more for the poor. He renounced the great benefits he had hitherto obtained from his affairs, and was satisfied with less, which he distributed not



only to charitable institutions, but also to individuals. But through that his place of business became still more sought after, and he could hardly carry out his charities without his wealth increasing. When a boy, the catechist had given him the *Imitation of Christ* as a present. That had been his favourite book in the time of his suffering youth. Now Herr Eberhard took up the book again and read it instead of the stock-exchange lists. He was serious over it. He had all luxury taken from his apartments. He had struggles with his family as one luxury was to be done away with after the other, but he said : ‘ Dear ones, we have gone astray in the wilderness of money, we must turn back and become men.’ The young people had to submit whether they liked it or not, to become men—and they became men. The sons gave up sport, the daughters dress. But they only did it after Mr. Eberhard told them one day that he had lost nearly his whole fortune in a speculation which had failed. In reality it was not exactly so, only that he gave away daily thousands of dollars to workhouses, hospitals, schools, churches and beggars. He still worked a few hours a day, the rest he spent in studying statistics, in searching out poverty and misery, and then he saw indeed that poverty and misery were above all measure unfathomable and that no wealth on earth could compensate for it. That did not make him despondent. He wished to do his utmost, and to sacrifice himself entirely to his fellow creatures. He diligently read



the Gospel of Christ :—Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the merciful, they will obtain mercy. Give to him who asks thee and do not turn from him who will borrow from thee. Let not your left hand know what your right does, and see that your alms remain secret. Do not gather treasures on earth, where rust and moths devour ; Lay up treasures in Heaven— And when Herr Eberhard lost himself in this teaching and followed it, he often breathed as if relieved. The man who died at his door no longer gazed at him with infinite reproach, he looked upon him almost kindly.

“The poor of all kinds crowded to the gate of the rich man. Mr. Eberhard no longer strictly discerned between deserved and undeserved poverty, he helped where and how he could. For one he paid the interest due, for another taxes, for a third he wrote himself as surety on the debtor’s bill. To one who had defrauded and was threatened with discovery he gave money to make up the deficit. And when his wife and children asked him what these people wanted, when the business was so entirely ruined, he answered : ‘These are the creditors come to fetch their property which I have hitherto administered.

“His wife was silent and looked full of presentiment into a sad future. Yet it was sweet to her, that her family was so worshipped by the populace, and that she herself, as the wife of the rich philanthropist, enjoyed honours on every occasion as if she were the



princess of the town and of the valley. Certainly in the background voices were heard : ‘ Those Eberhards know why they do so much good ; they could even do a great deal more. When a man like Eberhard gives a hundred dollars which he takes out of his cash box, it is just as if a poor man gave a penny. Such a man can give away a million, and it does not hurt him as much as if a poor man has to pawn his boots.’

“ Herr Eberhard heard few of these voices, for loud praise stood in the foreground. He sometimes appeared to himself like a saint who gives away the riches of this earth out of charity. He talked to his children of the immorality of wealth either inherited or not acquired personally, and made them earn their own living. It was a hard task to him, a superhuman fight, before he turned them out, yet at last the text : Thou shalt leave thy family and follow Me ! decided him. And he continued to give away the remainder of his fortune. His wife could in time have placed him under the tutelage of the law, if she had not been led astray by his representations that all had been lost long ago through an unfortunate speculation, and his giving away was nothing but the restitution of money entrusted to him. Now she fell round his neck and said : ‘ My dear husband, we shall have to go begging ourselves soon.’

“ ‘ O short sighted child of man,’ said Herr Eberhard to her, ‘ think of the word of the Saviour : He who has two coats give one to him who has none. See the



little birds in the air, the little flowers in the field, they sow not, they reap not, and the Heavenly Father nourishes and clothes them all the same. If there only remains to me a little garret, such as I once possessed then I am quite content.'

"A few years passed and his goal was reached. Herr Eberhard lived in a little cold garret, with sloping walls. And when his wife, who lay on a sick bed, wished to patch his coat, he could not go out to collect victuals, for he had only one coat. His sons, pampered in their youth, had not been able to stand the harsh struggle for existence and had perished, his daughters had taken up a trade which made it impossible for them ever to come under the honest eyes of their parents. So the two aged people were quite alone. But Herr Eberhard had not found the contemplation and the inward peace in his garret which he had hoped for. His deeds of charity sometimes knocked at his anxious heart like guilt, especially when he thought of his lost children. Besides, he was daily insulted by the brutality of those to whom he came as a beggar; they called him a spendthrift, who got his deserts. Of the people, almost numberless, to whom he had done good once upon a time in a large or a small way, only a few now existed; of these one excused himself with his own cares, the other handed him reluctantly a small gift and the good advice to go and earn something for himself—that manual work was no disgrace. Nothing remained of the boundless adoration he had once



enjoyed in the country, yea, it was even recalled to memory that worthlessness must after all lie in the blood, for his grandfather had been hanged.

“ Herr Eberhard found no fitting text in his gospel for such bitterness of heart. He felt that the beautiful words of the blessedness of the gentle, sad and despised did not fit his circumstances, as if the Saviour had been unable to think such a monstrous ingratitude in the world possible.

“ One day an order came from the law that Herr Eberhard must pay fifteen hundred thalers for a security he had once stood. Thereupon he answered : ‘ Do as you like, I have nothing.’ Then a constable appeared with two attendants, and with them the rich master-baker of K——. The latter took out his pocket-book, well filled with banknotes, but drew from it no banknotes but the debtor’s bill on which Herr Eberhard stood as security. The baker abused and cursed a while the former debauchee and windbag, who now meant to live on other honest people’s work. Then they took possession of the few pieces of furniture and household utensils and Herr Eberhard was given notice to quit.

“ A bundle on his right arm, on the left his sick wife, Herr Eberhard tottered out of the house. He knocked at the house of well-to-do people, once his neighbours—they were evasive. A poor old tobacco-seller who was herself suffering with cold, in her booth invited the poor people to rest with her. But Herr Eberhard



did not feel like resting, he left his wife with the woman and went out into the fields. A terrible tempest raged within him. He did not curse ungrateful mankind, no, he raged in infinite bitterness against the Gospel, which he had followed so full of faith and willing sacrifice, and which had brought him to his present pass.

“He went along by the millbrook. Then something came into his mind. He put it away quickly—he could not leave his wife. But what else? Now what else?—After long wanderings he turned back towards the town, it was beginning to get dark. He saw a big fat man waddling along in front of him, sticking his walking stick at every step self-assertively on the stony ground. That was the baker who had a while ago taken his home from him. He had probably been at his mill outside the town. Herr Eberhard’s blood boiled in madness when he saw, as it were, his monstrous error, his misfortune personified as it were, in this man. The baker was by no means a Christian; he was hard and cruel, he unhesitatingly trod down existence after existence if he could draw profit from it. And how he prospered and did not in the least run the risk of getting poor, ever losing the esteem of his fellow creatures! Had he not once drawn him out of a great business embarrassment? Was not perhaps the money in his well-stocked pocketbook to-day Eberhard’s money? Could he not take it back again now. . . . ?

“Suddenly Herr Eberhard bent down, picked up a



stone with sharp corners and flung it at the baker's head. The latter dropped down without a sound.

Herr Eberhard forgot why he had thrown the stone, left the dying man lying on the ground, and went hastily into the town, to put himself at the disposal of justice. Then some one ran after him and whispered: 'Herr Eberhard! Herr Eberhard! You want to follow your grandfather! But you must not.'

"Herr Eberhard stood still and asked the rather uncanny looking man what he wanted.

"'No,' the latter repeated, 'you must not. I'll take the baker upon myself. Do you remember? The man who defrauded the Post-office! Fundler.'

"'You are Johann Fundler? That Johann Fundler?'

"'I am he,' answered the other. 'And do you know what you said to me in those days when you lent me the misappropriated sum? The Lord in Heaven rejoices at each lost sheep that is saved. I became an honest man, without anybody having an idea that I had been a blackguard. And I enjoyed many a happy year.'

"'Do you mean to pay me back the money, perhaps?' asked Herr Eberhard.

"'I cannot do that.'

"'Nor do I need it.'

"'I have less than nothing,' said the Post-office official. 'I have stolen again, and the police are already on my heels; now nothing will help, and therefore I



take the baker upon myself and you can cross out my debt.'

"The man spoke in hasty staccato, and then hurried away.

"Herr Eberhard leaned against the trunk of a wild chestnut tree, and began to weep. After all gratitude exists! And what a gratitude!

"Late in the evening he returned to his wife, who lay in the tobacco-seller's small room on an old cloak, and said to her: 'If you only had been with me on this walk, we should both have a shelter in the future, not only I alone. Do you know the latest news? They have just carried past the dead baker who sold us up. Assassinated with a stone in the fields. The Post-office clerk Funder says he did it. Funder is a liar. I shall prove to those gentlemen right enough that Funder is a blackguard. But this blackguard is the most honest man in the whole town. He is grateful.'

"The next day the wife was taken to the workhouse and Herr Eberhard to prison. He had had hard work to wrest the slain baker from the grateful Post-office clerk. It seemed incredible that Herr Eberhard should have committed murder, and he voluntarily made a sworn statement of the facts, saying that he did not know himself if it was a murder of revenge or for the sake of robbery. And now he had only his meditations left. Now he was able to think, why he had wished to follow the Saviour to the garret, and no farther—not to shame and disgrace, not to persecution, not to bodily pain



and crucifixion? Why then had he sacrificed his social position, his fortune, yea even his family, to do justice to the Gospel if he at once yielded to human nature? Now he saw whither the imitation of Christ leads: If you follow the Saviour the whole way, you go to Heaven, if only half-way, you go to prison. In both cases there is suffering. He who will not suffer, innocently, must expiate."



## Chapter XVIII

### AN ATHEIST

**T**HERE are pathetic people in the world. Those fanatical materialists who unconsciously cherish the loftiest imaginable idealism—to redeem the world through matter—belong to that class.

My Doctor Roban, of Vienna, was such an idealist. He was an honest man, a thoroughly honourable, well-meaning creature, wishing the best to every one, but so extremely sensitive personally that he was convinced that everything that was best for his nature must also be best for all the others. He was very learned, could lose himself theoretically in the existence of a bird, a worm, a flower, a grain of sand, and praised pure objectivity as the highest standard of an educated human being. But he was absolutely incapable of understanding the inner life of his fellow-men, if it did not happen to resemble his own. He possessed a powerful battery of sarcasm and satire if it was a question of lashing out at the one-sidedness, intolerance and narrow-mindedness of others, never noticing that almost every blow recoiled upon himself. So, in spite of his great learning, and in spite of consummate logic in his way of thinking,



he was as innocent as a child, and in this innocence as good as an angel. I made Dr. Roban's acquaintance during a holiday trip in Lower Austria about two years ago, after leaving the forest for the town. My aspiration to become an educated man was congenial to him, and often when I came from Graz to Vienna he made me stay with him and be his guest. He was a bachelor and had grey hair which, combed backward, fell in waves over his broad shoulders. He was very stout, yet was alert in his movements and quickly tripped by my side through the streets, no matter how often he had to wipe the perspiration from his face with a blue handkerchief. In ordinary conversation he was a little clumsy in expression, the word that came first was good enough for him ; if it had to be the most characteristic, that had often to be searched for ; in chasing after it he stumbled over a great number of others. But on the other hand, when he had happily put his sentence together it might have been printed without any farther correction. In learned, philosophical matters he was very eloquent ; his head was his book, everything was well ordered in it, and he only needed to read out of it.

He was much concerned for the spiritual welfare of mankind in general, and for mine in particular. The chief thing, to him, was knowledge. The more a man knows, the more power he has to do ; the better a man is outwardly, the more satisfied is he inwardly.



One day, we sat opposite each other on two easy chairs in his house; the conversation had stopped, when he asked suddenly: "How old are you now, my dear friend?"

"Past four-and-twenty."

"Good. You are a man. But are you man enough to hear a great truth, which I have to communicate to you? It is a hard matter of fact; childhood's dreams may be lovely, but they must come to an end. When you are strong enough, I will tell you something."

"Does it concern my family?" I asked, suffocated, for I remembered that my mother had not been very well for some time.

"In reality it does not concern your family," said Dr. Roban; "the matter is much more important. See: Educated people must despise ecstasy, must learn to think clearly, and above all belong to truth. And so, when you are really in the right frame of mind not to be too taken aback, I must confide something to you." He bent forward, laid his hands on my knee and said solemnly: "My dear Rosegger, there is no God."

I breathed freely and replied: "Oh, if that's all, I read that in a book when I was a boy."

"Indeed!" he replied surprised, "but many traits in you show a belief in a God."

Hereupon, I answered that I proceeded scientifically in this matter, and that I could only relinquish a God if His non-existence was proved.



The doctor at once burst forth in a flood of examples from the appearances of life, from natural history, which, in his opinion, proved with the sharpness of a razor how it stood with the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.

I let myself be caught in an argument, and so like two fools, a young and an old one, we fenced with finite things in order to get at the infinite. At last, he became violent and called me a simpleton incapable of being educated, a religious zealot, a subjective ecstatic who could not rise superior to his highly personal feeling nor enter into the objective world-contemplation of free spirits.

I loved the doctor so well that I should have liked to accept his philosophy—for it was nothing else—if with the temperament of five-and-twenty a new conception of the world could be put on like a clean shirt. Meanwhile, he declared himself satisfied that I did not contradict Darwinism, for which I had no reason, because behind it everything still finds a place that, in my opinion, had hitherto made up the value and the consecration of the world.

Once I put before the doctor the impertinent argument that natural science had perhaps to ignore God and immortality of the soul, but not to deny it. But speculative and didactic leanings were too strong in him, and he sought continually to convert me to his opinions.

His desire to press his philosophical creed upon his



fellow-creatures increased with the years ; “ he who requires religious paraphernalia is a coward,” he used to say, “ an idiot, who fancies a soul in an animal body ! ” A *Cretin*, who presents his compliments to a personal God. There is no personal God.”

And he repeated it continually, so that somebody once said of him : “ That man hurts my feelings. To put forever before me : My dear friend, twice two is four ! A thing that goes without saying. There is no personal God, take that in ! Twice two is four, take that in ! ”

I enlarged on it no farther. Twice two can also be five. Once, by the bye, I drove two couple of sheep in the morning to pasture and brought home five in the evening.

If he went in for statistics or geography, zoology or geology, technology or aesthetics, or if he took up ordinary every-day things, he always came to the same conclusion and always lost his temper over it : “ There is no God. We are animals, have no other purpose than the animals, our ethical law is nothing but the law of human self-preservation.” He called heart a weakness ; yet he had moist eyes when he saw anybody suffer, and helped, where he could, as if it were really worth while to quit the high standard of science and to give himself over to softness of the heart for beings born only to die. In this man, especially, I saw that materialism is by a long way not so black as it is painted—but it requires a noble nature ; it



would not do for brutal people (and they are certainly the greater number).

"Therefore brutal natures must be refined through education and knowledge," said Dr. Roban. "With most people life is too short and too hard for that," was my view. "Materialism may be suitable for the rich, they have the ingredients for it. Yes, if this new natural philosophy could do away with poverty, inequality of rights, then all respect to it. But we know how it is with animals : might is right."

"Not so, my dear sir," said the doctor, "Materialism does away with sham-ideals in order to substitute true human ideals ; it develops heart, and mind and makes them receptive for all which is elevated and noble in life and art."

"After what model ? " I asked, "to what purpose ? If the world is not ruled according to an eternal reason and grand purpose, there is nothing elevated or noble, and we must be satisfied with the senseless sliding on of the world and of the human race ! "

"But, my respected friend ! " he cried, "we become refined quite naturally ; plant, animal and man perfect themselves in aeons, and when we consider our forefathers in the animal kingdom we may be quite proud of how far we have got already. We shall not stop here ; materialism will in future cause us to progress much more quickly than false ideals have hitherto done."

So we chatted, and it always leaked out that the



great materialist was a great idealist, and it happened that, like a skilful conjuror, he always pulled out of the bag into which he had first put an animal the most glorious human being.

He often starved himself in order to assist poor people, not so much that they might study, but that they might live.

Another time he said that parental love was only an animal instinct, that gratitude was a discreet expression of selfishness, patriotism a form of self-adoration. Under his scientific and philosophical magnifying glass every virtue dissolved into a little dust.

That gradually tore me from many a heaven. But when I considered the sweet inconsistency, how the professors of such doctrine in life are grateful, are ready for great sacrifices for the fatherland (he went to the Rhine in 1870, with the intention of giving himself up to the nursing of the wounded), how he was, indeed, a model brother, who provided for two aged sisters, how abstemious he was in physical enjoyment, unceasingly endeavouring to seek the truth, to serve the truth, to invite all men who came in his way to happiness, to find happiness there where never an animal found it, in research and knowledge—when I consider all that—I must confess that he was a believer, believing in the victory of Good. If, with most teachers and philosophers, we are expected to follow only their words and not their deeds, it was just the



reverse with my doctor. He lived to a great age, was carried by God to lofty heights, but he always argued like a stubborn child : “ There is no God, there is no God.”



## Chapter XIX

### LORD, WE PERISH !

“**Y**OU would not know him again,” said the people, when I asked after him.

“He has retired into an unknown solitude. You will hardly find him.”

But that I should see. I had respected the man for many years, admired his pure, great heart which beat only for humanity. All that he did for the poor and the wretched, for education and morality, all he did personally, through societies, as orator and teacher, was admirable. He sacrificed his working capacity, his substance for the general good, he desired to train his children for the service of humanity. To emulate him appeared to me most beautiful and yet most difficult. There were only a few who understood him, the great crowd jeered at him. That did not seem to influence him. He worked untiringly to improve education and in the spirit of Christianity. He fought against all Phariseism, against egotism and falseness, against all kinds of brutality ; he fought against vivisection as well as against religious abuses, against a profligate life, against alcohol and other poisons, he was against duels as well as against war, he was a



vegetarian, lived for natural healing, was an enthusiastic upholder of peace, a fiery opponent of all brutal and cynical hatred of class and race. Without talking much about Germanism he lived quietly and gladly for German virtue. And his strength for all this originated in the firm belief that humanity would and must ennoble and perfect itself into a Kingdom of God on earth, and that every good word and example contributed a small seed towards it.

But of late a change had come over him and when, returning from a long journey, I inquired after good Herr Stephan, I was told he was not to be recognized.

I went to the house which had once belonged to him and in the first storey of which, looking on to the street, he used to live. He no longer lived there. On the ground floor was a butcher's and a tavern. A young medical man lived on the first floor, who had arranged two rooms for vivisection ; on the second floor were fencing-rooms, which were used not only for duels, but also occasionally for more serious fights. Where had Stephan, the idealist, gone ? They shrugged their shoulders, and did not know. On the stairs leading up to the fencing rooms, I met one of his sons, who told me that his father was living in the suburb, in an old garden-pavilion ; but that he knew nothing more, because he had forbidden any one to visit him.

If he has forbidden any one to visit him, then a friend is bound to him, I thought, and after a



while I discovered his abode. It stood in the big uncultivated garden of a decayed manor-house. It was quite overgrown with bushes; over-ripe melons and wormeaten apples were lying on a bench near the door. The door was locked. At my first knocking nothing stirred. At my second a voice inside called that it would not be opened; at my third knocking he looked out of the window and, when he saw me, he went to the door and opened it. His exterior had not changed, only it appeared to me as if he was dressed with more care than formerly, his hair well brushed, his beard carefully tended, his blue eye calm and mild as ever.

He lived quite alone in the house, yet I saw that by the side of his bed there was a cot, in which a creature lay. Seen closer it was a little fox-coloured dog, which lay curled up like a caterpillar on the pillow. The animal lifted its head a little, and looked suspiciously at me with staring eyes, showing its teeth.

"It seems to me, my friend, that you've given up all your rights," I said to Stephan. "What does it mean?"

"It's a wild beast!" he said grinding his teeth.

I quickly withdrew the hand, with which I meant to pat the dog, then he laughed and cried: "I don't mean the animal. That which calls itself man is a wild beast."

"With your permission, sir," I said, still half-joking, "I belong to that species."



“ Oh, we two ! ” he replied, “ We are no longer wild, we are tame, no longer in the natural state. We are degenerates they say. We who are tame and patient and charitable are just good enough to be extirpated. He who is strong, and brutal, and savage is master in the greatness, the nobleness, the flower, the goal of mankind is in him. So we can reserve no rights for ourselves.

“ That you should speak thus ! ” I said. “ You must have had bitter experiences.”

“ Which of us have not had them if we go about with open eyes ? Or do you, too, belong to those that see nothing ? ”

“ You have often said yourself that men are not angels.”

“ Angels ! ” he cried laughingly. “ Who expects them to be Angels. They are devils ! ”

“ Formerly you believed in the world and in men.”

“ My friend, he who believes most firmly is the most deeply disappointed. I hoped, believed, all, only not the one thing, when they said : Man is after all only an animal, only a more dangerous, more abominable animal than the tiger, the hyena, because he is provided with greater capacities. I called those who spoke like this, worthless pessimists, and I spent myself full of hope for the brood. Oh, what I might have been ! How I now weep for my lost life ! At first I was on the right part, you do not know that perhaps. My father, a Hungarian, cut straps out of dogs' and



horses' skins, and if it happened that the king wished to hang any one, my father was called with the hemp collar. I was to have learnt that trade; it might be a remunerative trade, if it were managed rightly. But I fled. At Augsburg I learnt commerce. I cannot remember ever to have gambled on the stock exchange, falsified goods, or taken up unsound concerns, or to have made a fraudulent bankruptcy. Then it could be done without those things. I wished afterwards to employ the profit of my goods otherwise, and then came the rub. Life, humanity must be understood in a bigger sense, must be compared with words and eternities. One leap towards heaven! Love! Love! Love! With word and pen I praised human love, celebrated noble human characters and deeds. They laughed at me for it and they were right."

He did not speak excitedly, but quite composedly, apparently after much reflection, and that seemed to me uncanny. He had always been silent over his inner experiences, now he seemed to find it needful to speak out, and I listened. This listening was a painful proceeding. I will write down briefly what he said. The brown doggie lay in a doze, sometimes it was as if it pricked up its ears to hear what was said.

"There is a fierce fire on earth," said friend Stephan. "And all talk about morality, all pedagogy is oil upon the flames. It flares up the more disastrously, the hotter it is cursed. I have not long let myself be dissuaded. Science, Religion! But look, science is



used in a spirit of selfishness, of arrogance, of vanity. To-day everybody has religion on his tongue, nobody in the heart. Our time is full of divine principles, and full of diabolical deeds. The more self-denying a few try to be the more selfish is the crowd. Cast a glance on our political parties."

"I pray you, Stephan, do not speak of it !"

"It's true then, you, too, are sick of it ! And think of certain occurrences at public meetings and gatherings, think of the press which gives the public the proceedings in Parliament and in the law courts with criminal indiscretion. A university which finds ready scholars everywhere. Brutality, evil instincts are busily promoted. The more Societies formed against alcohol and drunkenness the more spirits are brewed. The more eagerly benevolent persons strive to spread the principles of a natural way of living, to protect the rights of animals, torture of animals is carried on with greater indifference in the lecture-halls of medical science. The great international union of Promoters of Peace ! We thought there might be sufficient opposition to designate these people as charitable, fanciful ; oh, no, they are publicly jeered at ; we read and hear of persons downright indignant that there are people who, enemies to the enormous slaughter of men, wish for peace ; yea they declare quite openly that peace is an evil and war a good thing, a source of human greatness and virtue. Naturally, if that is so, we ought to prevent peace, sow strife, encourage hostility, make war,



kindle the world to hatred and fire, and the public, their senses blunted, listen or scream applause. And these enormous armies——”

“But they write daily that these great armies are the pledges of peace.”

“Peace,” cried Stephan, parrying the subject. “Why, it is war every day. War in our own country, among our own people, in our own homes, war to the knife. Just cast a glance on those race-struggles, my friend? Breathing wrath, they are directed against foreign peoples, and, filled with hatred, they turn against those of their own compatriots who do not consent to rage with them. It is true, and I understand that a race considered dangerous should be held in check. I understand that, from political and economic reasons, perhaps from many others, the power of the Jews in our lands must be limited; that happens to be a political right, and it is the right of self-preservation in a people. But, my friend, what we have daily before our eyes, is not a political struggle, that is a madman’s chase and anger against persons, against human beings. Lies and calumny are the most ordinary weapons, they already show signs of using the incendiary torch and the battle-axe. And that is in a civilized state which guarantees rights and protection under all circumstances, and imposes for that reason taxes of money, strength and blood.”

I answered soothingly: “You must admit, and formerly you praised it yourself, that, at the present



time, much more is done for the poor and unfortunate than in olden times."

"In a great measure that is hypocrisy, partly a bad conscience," was his answer. "They make the people on the whole systematically poor and wretched, in order to give alms to the poor. No, as long as the welfare of humanity at large is not promoted differently from the way in which it is done to-day, so long does this charity on a small scale annoy me. I must confess to you that I am discouraged."

"You exaggerate, Stephan !"

"Let me tell you one more thing," he continued. "My family knew my principles, I put them before them every day with affectionate kindness. I acted according to them. I said once : When I see how foreign children are treated at school by their companions, and out of doors by street-arabs and others, my heart breaks, because it makes me think of you, of you, my children, and if it happened to you to suffer innocently on account of your race until the heart, weeping in secret, becomes hardened and embittered and becomes dead to the innocent joys of life ! When I spoke so humanely of human beings, my own children stared at me stupefied, as if I spoke in a foreign tongue, spoke of strangers that did not concern us ! Or they boldly contradicted me, using the tone of the vulgar, which is to-day the good tone. A little while ago I went for a walk with my nephew, a youth of seventeen. He was educated in the classical school



of the humanities ; he takes a cheerful bright view of life, is of a kindly good and sociable disposition, and has already proved himself clever, as well as warm-hearted. Well, during this walk, on the lively Corso, an old man, apparently of the tribe of Israel, came along. Modestly and politely he tried to make his way through, but by accident, in the crowd, he touched my nephew's shoulder. The latter stopped still quickly, looked after the old man, with a wrathful eye, and called out, loudly, Hog of a Jew !—the people laughed, no one gave the boy the well-merited box on the ears, and I am petrified with horror. Later on, when taken to account by me, the lad said the Jews ought to be shown everywhere distinctly that they are an abomination to us, in order to make their sojourn among us so disagreeable that they may go away. All who heard him agreed with him with much animation. I thought I must sink into the earth with shame at such street-arab-manners in our youth."

"Stephan," "I replied, "brutality and recklessness have always existed and the hobbledehoy age is nothing new ! Such things would not have upset your highly courageous health formerly. Why then now ?"

The little dog began to whine, quite softly, as if afraid of complaining of pain, it moaned like a child.

"Is it hurting again, is it ?" asked the man tenderly of the animal, lifting it slowly and taking it in his arms. Then I saw that the dog was wounded, had a bad



hind-leg, which was much swollen. Stephan washed the wound carefully, speaking caressing words to the animal and patting it the while. Then he used aceta alumina and made a bandage, after which the animal was quiet again, and looked at his sick-nurse with faithful eyes.

"How did you get at this mongrel?" I asked him.

"I will tell you. Do you remember the old pedlar woman who perambulated the town and offered matches, smoking utensils, hand-mirrors, shirt-buttons, mechanical toys and similar wares for sale in the restaurants and cafés."

"The lean woman with the pitch-black hair?"

"And with the little dog which entertained the company with his high jumps, if they held up something good to eat two or three yards high.

"And which with a little basket in his mouth went round collecting for his modest tricks! Is that the dog? Have you bought it?"

"Inherited it."

"Is the old woman dead?"

"Something like it," said Stephan and added with lively irony: "Only think, this person, she was a witch! The children ran after her as after the Piper of Hamelin. In a suburb outside the town, near the water, one of them came to grief. Persons worthy to be believed bore witness that the pedlar-woman sat in a forsaken brickkiln and drank



Christian blood out of a silver cup. When she was seen again after that with her little box of wares, and her dog, and she sang a song, the children ran after her again, and grown up persons too, educated people among them, and cried out : There she is ! Catch her ! Send her about her business. So they have chased the old woman through many streets. I met the noisy mob, the old woman panted along and was just about to break down, the little dog hovered round her with anxious barking, when he was seized by a rough fellow and hurled with an abominable curse against the wall of a house. It fell to the ground and remained quivering on the pavement. When they tried to lay hands on the aged woman, I rushed into the thick to defend her. Then I was clutched and thrown down beside the dog. When I was able to pick myself up, the rabble had gone. A few days after the old woman died. Well, the seriously wounded animal remained with me as a legacy. My friend," he concluded, "since that day I have had enough. It is all in vain, I tell you, it is all in vain. They are beasts——"

So, this is what I wanted to tell you of poor good Stephan. Naturally they scoffed at him : he who would improve the world has come down to the dogs. He turned his heart, of which human beings were not worthy, toward the animal. What the man related to me may be a little exaggerated. Yet I confess that in these extraordinary days one might feel similarly inclined. Everything points to the improve-



ment of the world and meanwhile it gets worse with the quality of mankind. And so we get discouraged. We should, then, be happy if a dog remains to whom we can do good.



## Chapter XX

### NOTHING CAN HAPPEN TO YOU !

I HAVE nearly reached the end of the book—only a last reminder, that to all of us, even to the poorest in spirit, a model has been given which stand outside the material world.

We know that among the ideals of the human soul stand, for instance, liberty, justice, love of country, art, religion. But often one is set against the other.

Religion loses adherents in proportion as a man turns to other ideals. The red-hot Socialist, the passionate nationalist cannot also be religious, and in any case he feels no need for it ; his mind is filled with other pictures, through which he raises himself above commonplace existence. I respect every ideal which delivers a human being from his material *ego*, but it must be said that ideals are not of equal value. The socialistic and political ideals in themselves are not worth anything, they must be put into practice. Nationalism, for instance, only obtains importance when the feeling is followed by the deed, when he who is proud of his country is also ready to work for it, to suffer for it, to sacrifice his personal advantages, and if need be, himself. Then the national idea



stands so high that it is only surpassed by one other—the ideal of humanity.

But as we are wretched creatures, threatened daily by poverty and misfortune, entangled in self-love and oppressed and paralysed by the consciousness of the nothingness of existence—it is a question if the ideals of liberty, love of country, art, truth, etc., always suffice, and if they prove a support in every condition of life.

According to my experiences and reflections, religion is the truest of all ideals. In happy hours of life, when our senses have taken a tight hold upon the world, the spirit of religion is relegated to the background. In trial and in sadness it comes forward with its consolation and heavenly strength—and man, otherwise forsaken and deceived, does not break down. But it must be remembered, that pure religion is meant here, the yearning for a kindly deity, who is from eternity to eternity, and who does not neglect one of His creatures, and a humble confidence in that belief.

Formal religion, consisting in usages of the Church, makes man happier by its material influence in feeding him with a new bread. But an inward religion, which has fully entered into the heart of man, so that he no longer needs visible signs of the invisible grace, brings man that indestructible happiness and fortitude of which Anzengruber's stonebreaker says : " Nothing can happen to you ! "

Many a man to-day hardly knows what it means



to have religion. And it is difficult to make it comprehensible to him in his *milieu* ; he has no need for it, yea, he—the declared foe of all superstition—is wrapped up in the superstition that it is not “up to date” to be religious. He wants to find something unworthy of the human mind in religion, something “only fit for old women.” He proves by such decisions his incapacity of grasping even dimly what I mean.

There is also the kind of man who denies one God, or the Gods, and who is all for a purely ethical philosophy. I do not mean that ethics is not religion. All that has a worldly purpose, that requires either downright proof or downright denial, has nothing to do with religion. The foundation of religion is humility. We are insignificant and impotent, we can in reality prove nothing nor deny anything that influences us ; we can do nothing except submit and trust in Him from whom we come and in whom we are. We of to-day think so much of truth. Good. That we can do nothing and are poor creatures, that is the pure truth. Leave me alone with your “achievements” as long as not one of our desires is satisfied, not one of our hopes fulfilled ! I mean those desires and those hopes which have to do with our inward happiness and the pure joy of existence. Get along with your theory that our only task is to “progress.” Nature herself provides a necessary development. But it is possible to be unnatural inside nature, and that we are when we eat without feeling hunger, and when we



exert ourselves to acquire needs of which nature hitherto knew nothing. Man's task resembles that of the other creatures : he shall rejoice to be. But he has greater means of rejoicing than the other creatures. He has the capacity of sacrificing himself for his fellow-men, and of finding satisfaction in that willing self-sacrifice. He has the capacity of seeing the nothingness of this span of life, and of feeling calm and courageous with that knowledge. He has the capacity of hoping, of hoping for a great eternity, and of feeling happy in that hope. And all brings him to the same point—to rejoice that he is. He is impotent, but he is. He suffers distress and trials, but he is. This impotence means nothing, for he is an atom of what is almighty. His trials mean nothing, for he passes through them towards a spiritual perfection, which makes it clear to him that he is one with the All blessed.

If any one thinks like that, what can happen to him ? The unhappy will laugh at this manner of thinking of a happy man for whom there is no death although he daily sees a dozen coffins carried past his window ; for whom there exists no suicide, because his existence is indestructible. And what arrogance, they say, for a man to imagine himself to be indestructible !

Yes, that is—to return to the chief thing—the humility in man and the arrogance in God. That is called religion.



We rarely meet religious people, or rather, they do not show it. Those who appear religious before the world are not so, and they who are really religious do not appear so. There are still people left who never hurt any one, who keep modestly in the background in the "struggle for life," who do their duties simply and faithfully, and live for their fellow-creatures with a calm, cheerful heart and good-will. We love such persons, and we do not think that they are religious because they do not proclaim it, because they chastely veil their love of God, and offer only its good fruits to the world. I believe such truly religious people are still to be found everywhere, in every rank, among the workmen as among the aristocrats, among men of science as among peasants. For religion is a universal, ineradicable instinct, I might say a means of protection against the infinite desolateness of this life.

In mankind—even to-day—there is an inexhaustible fund of goodness, confidence and value, which is not to be overcome by earthly adversity, an infinite source of desire of life, of yearning for perfection and for eternal happiness. What, then, shall we call these emotions? They are too great, too divine, to bear a name fit to be pronounced by human tongue. Good. But we may be allowed to risk for one thing, namely, that such emotions shall ever be roused, nourished and developed. For one reason, because they make mankind better, but still more because they bring him a bliss which is not to be found either in science, or



art, or liberty, or equality, or patriotism, or in anything in the outward cosmos.

When religious instincts are entirely neglected they perish, they gradually become extinct, and what remains is an homunculus or a harmful being, which strives to escape this "senseless, foolish" existence through forgetfulness and suicide. Yet such a being is not free from metaphysical, mystical ideas; it believes that if this present life is done away with it will be able to sleep, to sleep eternally unconscious, and to be no longer anything which can feel and suffer. I call this notion metaphysical and mystical, because it is opposed to the natural laws familiar to us, to our practical modes of thought, and thus, so to speak, makes up a kind of religion here below. Not to be eternal, and to be nothing! What an unnatural idea! To bring a proof of not being eternally is even more impossible than to bring one for the eternal life of the personality. We have at least an approximate example of the latter: life in general, our present life which need only be conceived as continued in one shape or another. But not to be eternally? Where, then, is somebody who is not? A man who died yesterday certainly no longer exists for us to-day; we also believe ourselves to be convinced of the fact that the same man in the same way can be nowhere in existence on earth because he is dead, and because we see the remains of his being decay before us. There our wisdom ends. But what opposes



that conviction? Our imagination, limitless space, infinite time where and when under eternally changed conditions all life must live, and where and when we cannot imagine anything less than the borders of eternity and of the universe; a world according to a plan in which all moves in the closest unity with past and future; the indomitable personal longing for life which makes all that which impedes life pain, and all that increases it pleasure. Finally, the ineradicable longing of man for perfection, for everlasting being, the consciousness of self. The greatest surety against the non-existence of the individual after death is the impossibility of the proof that his consciousness of his *ego* has ceased for ever with the dissolution of his temporary body.

But I do not know if with all that has been enumerated, the eternal life of the individual is made infinitely more probable than the eternal death of which they say that it begins suddenly after the dying of a certain body. Perhaps the most important reasons for eternal life are not exactly touched upon here. [Perhaps mind and language do not suffice for the most important reasons, so that they can only live in our hearts as presentiments.

For we cannot speak or act religion; we must have it. It does not exist either in ideas or in deeds, but in personal qualities. And therefore we ought not to speak so much of it, as I have done in this book.



Only sometimes I long to remind ourselves of the elements of indestructible bliss which rest in us, more in some, less developed in others, in a third kind almost entirely buried under the desires and aspirations of the fleeting day. I wish to state that not one of the merits of our souls is as significant for us as a religious heart. I have had opportunity among the thousands and thousands of sham-religionists to meet truly religious minds. I cannot imagine anything nobler than a person who, simple and unpretentious, strictly and conscientiously fulfils his present task of life, because he knows that it is necessary for the construction of the heavenly ladder ; who takes pleasure in his earthly doings without giving up his whole soul to them ; who enjoys the joys of life with thanksgiving, but also knows how to bear misfortune, distress and trials with high courage ; who calmly avoids his opponents, or meets them without hate, because he says that he too makes mistakes, or that such things shall purify and steel him for higher purposes. He knows neither terror nor fear, for nothing can happen to him ; the utmost that can happen is to have to die, and that after all is a renascence.

Such a life is beautiful, good and happy.

And now let us put the case. It is not so ! Or rather, that God and eternal life are doubtful ; must we not even in that case yield to a peculiarity of the heart and seek a mood of the soul, which can make us beautiful, good and happy ? Has not religion, then,



the same right to be nursed and taken care of as, perhaps, art, which is also liable to decay ; or science, which is also doubtful, and which possesses its chief force in that very doubt ?

God save us from the fashion of being religious which threatens us to-day. Fashionable Christianity has so often filled up the source of salvation with sand that we wish people would frankly say what they mean. An honest atheist is before God worth a thousand times more than a hypocritical Christian. For, as has been often pointed out in these meditations, he who strives with a pure and faithful heart in his own way for a high ideal stands on the threshold of the Kingdom of Heaven. And while in an ardent desire for knowledge he defiantly tears the veil in order to behold the truth, the deity stands before him in such infinite greatness, beauty and goodness, that man forgets his doubts and his striving and sinks worshipping on his knees.



## Chapter XXI

### WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE IN HEAVEN ?

**W**HAT will it be like in Heaven ? That question was once put to the author of this book in good earnest. Fifty years ago I might have been able to give an answer. Now I no longer know exactly. But I will try to remember Heaven is a great, great Church. In the foreground, at the high altar, sits Holy Trinity, surrounded by all the saints of God. Naked babes with golden wings are flying about in the nave.

The blessed, who have found each other again after death, clad in white garments. They sit on the benches, holding candles in their hands and listen to music, beautiful above all description—that is how I should have answered the question as a child with the utmost assurance. But even in those days it struck me that my mother, when resting on a bench after a heavy day's work, sometimes leaned her head thoughtfully on her hand, speaking softly to herself the words : "What will it be like in Heaven ?" Yes, my God, that she, who stood so far above me in everything, must know much better than I. Her question awoke the first doubt in me. And later the more they talked



in churches and Christian doctrines and in books of Heaven, the more variously it was described, the less clear the representation of Heaven became for me till finally the question : What will it be like in Heaven ? yielded to another : Is there a heaven at all ? At that time I was acquainted with people who perhaps believed in a Heaven, but not in a hell. An eternal hell, into which mankind, created sinful, was to be cast, was not unthinkable together with God's mercy and justice. Hell we had already in this world, said some, and the others opined, Heaven ought to be established in this world. The latter were on the right track, but yet went astray. They began a luxurious life with all sensual enjoyments. Such a heaven was pleasant enough for a time, but had the great disadvantage of not lasting forever, and then hell came in with a vengeance and often lasted longer than Heaven had formerly. Then many saw that it was, after all, necessary to transplant Heaven into eternity, beyond the gates of death, where it was safe and out of reach of all earthly eventualities. And yet that Heaven remained earthly to the people ; that is to say, it corresponded to their earthly desires. The peasant perhaps imagined an infinite series of fruitful corn crops, a continual season of fine weather. The farm labourer wished always to lie in the hay and to have the maid-servant bring out smoked meat and dumplings to him every day, to the barn. The publican imagined in eternity that there would be no official closing time ;



that in eternity his tavern would always be full of guests, who were ever good-tempered, never brawled nor owed their account. The veteran Franz, who had lost his leg at Magenta, was convinced that in Heaven, through the alliance with the Heavenly Host, the House of Austria would at last make mince-meat of the Italians in such a way that they might form the "filling for sausages." In short, the people imagine Heaven as the continuation of their earthly life, and as the fulfilment of their everyday desires.

And in reality all who imagine a Heaven do more or less the same. Earthly imagination can, after all, only build with earthly bricks. Even the building site falls out accordingly. "There above the stars" there are enough building-sites at disposal, and there also Heaven has been erected for the great mass. Then came the scientists who poked their noses into everything, and who are only eager for the so-called truth, although it is chiefly they who certify that the limited human brain, as accidental and subordinate matter, is not fit either to recognize or to endure the truth. Then came the astronomers and measured the spaces "above the stars" as the geometer measures the land, and said : "Away with Heaven ! This is still part of the world ; there is no room for Heaven here !" So Heaven was pushed out farther and farther, till at last it entirely disappeared from the sight of mankind. Then the reckless question : "What will it be like in Heaven ?" was no longer asked ; but they asked anxiously and



despairingly : “ Where is Heaven ? ” They asked the priests, the philosophers, the artists and the poets—but they never asked One whom they ought to have asked first of all—Him, who has shown Heaven to us, Jesus the Christ. He did not point to the firmament when He showed Heaven to us. He has said : “ In my father’s house are many dwellings.” As many as there are human hearts which rejoice in God, as many as there are desires, means and ways, which, guided by good-will, strive towards God, so many dwellings as there are in the house of the Heavenly Father. Jesus, the Christ, has promised us the eternity of Heaven, but has not bid us wait for death to go to Heaven, as if the bitterness of death must come before Heaven can begin. My dear friend, the matter is quite different and much better. According to the teaching of the Lord, Heaven can begin before death, yes ; it must begin before death, if it is to be after death. If Heaven has not already begun with you, it will begin as soon as you desire it. Already to-day, at this moment, the veil that covers up the Kingdom of Heaven for you can fall, for Heaven has been placed within you, you blessed child of God.

You must seek Heaven in your own heart, you must have it in your soul ; in the same soul in which live the little joys and sufferings of the present day ; in which you feel harsh grief and vexation on account of your business or the earning of your daily bread, in which you desire for the applause of your fellow-citizens, the



praise of the newspapers ; in the same soul in which sprout all your childish aspirations and vanities, which fill the present forenoon and afternoon and spoil your quiet sleep at night. Behold, in the same small soul is the great, eternal Kingdom of Heaven, is the beginning of this Kingdom of Heaven as soon as you will. If you are so far from it that you ask : " How is that credible ? This miserable earthly life has the Kingdom of Heaven in it ? This pitifully despondent voluptuous heart has within it the Kingdom of Heaven ? " do not be of little faith. You have often already heard the word—Blessed are the poor, the peaceful, the merciful, the long suffering, the humble—and you have thought nothing of it. Perhaps it has not even struck you that it is not said : They will be blessed !—but that it says : They are blessed !—Jesus the Christ has ever said great things in few words, so that we must, so to speak, interpret it first for our daily use, and translate it into our way of thinking, in order to see that they are not merely great words, but rather truths, which may be wonderfully applied to our daily life.

Yes, that is granted, I hear you say, but before all we must believe in God.

How believe ? I think nothing of belief. Nowadays belief is far too much talked about and that awakes doubt. We can only believe in things that are uncertain, that are not proved. Does anybody say that he believes in the sun ? We need not believe in



God, for we know Him by knowledge. Will our exceedingly imperfect senses re-perceive Him everywhere and at all times. If we had a greater soul than the worm in the ground, if we were great beings spiritually, then we should see still more clearly the all-powerful, all-high deity which surrounds us, that we can now only dimly feel. Yet the vague feeling of the eternal tells no more than all earthly knowledge can tell us. Who preaches to you to believe in your own existence ? The demand to believe in the existence of God is much more preposterous than exhortation to believe in your own earthly life. This is not so much a matter of course, because you may negative it, because you can destroy it. God is. I assert it with the same calmness with which something that is a matter of course is asserted and mean almost to apologise for saying it. God is, because everything only exists through Him.

Therefore we no longer speak thus : Believe, we say. Trust ! Trust in Him who is all and guides all. Trust that we are His, that He will never leave us. Trust when we are prosperous, trust when we are in trouble. We are immortal, it is not a question of the few years which we call our life, it is a question of the eternal To Be and a rising to perfection. And, as we cannot know the ways and means, we must leave those to Him whose Providence bridges over all eternities. Many a thing that comes over us and hurts us so much, things which we fancy the greatest misfortune, will be



necessary for our eternal happiness—if we resign ourselves in humble trust.

Do you imagine that such confidence in an unknown being is against human nature ? Away in a wild forest stood a tumble-down hut. It was supported by two wooden props of which one was split and the other bent. In the hut an emaciated woman, still young, lay on straw and rags, ill with consumption. A man, feverish with grief, crouched by the hearth, and made a fire with clumsy hands, in order to boil milk in a saucepan ; but he could not reach the milk, standing in the other corner, for he had broken his leg in the forest, and it had not been set, and hurt furiously.

Three children, from two to five years old, asked whiningly for milk, the eldest reached the jug and spilt the whole contents on the floor. The man gave a cry of despair. The woman soothed him as far as her breath allowed. “Now it is time for God to come to our aid,” she said. They themselves had done their part faithfully and diligently, now they had come to an end, and God was at the beginning. Till now she had always had anxiety, because she feared she might omit something that was her duty. Now they had no longer any duty, because they were quite powerless, now they might calmly wait for God’s assistance. Therefore she felt now that they were certainly saved. Her words made the man’s heart lighter. If indeed the rule of God had now begun in his hut then all must indeed change. That the children must go to bed to-



day without milk was nothing, to-morrow people would come with food and a doctor with help. What happened ? In the night the hut broke down and buried the sick woman and the little children. When the wood-cutters found the man in the morning amongst the ruins, he was still sufficiently alive to stammer : ' In God's name, so it is the best ! ' Then he too was saved.

If we consider it from the higher point of view, did not God do the best ? The innocence of the children the rising nature of the man, the trust of the woman touched Him. He did not attempt to patch things up for the poor people, He made quite a new beginning.

He who has to do with God, measures with a different measure. Seventy or eighty years are nothing to him ; he only knows an eternity, in the very midst of which he stands with his little bit of an earthly life. His spirit strides, sometimes stumbling over a planet, through the infinite. He walks arm in arm with God, who does not let the stumbler fall. With this unconditional confidence, this complete rest in the Sonship to God, it is good to be man. That is the standpoint where it is easy to be indifferent towards things so highly valued in everyday life, or at least not to become their slave ; when it becomes easy to bear daily trials, nay even heavy blows of fate, bravely, because they only last a moment in the sight of the Eternal, where it becomes easy to love mankind, to sacrifice oneself to it, because we know what an infinite



value each single man has as an eternal child of God ; and finally where it becomes easy to submit meekly to death as the narrow gate into a better existence.

And he who, of cheerful spirit, lives in such trust, has the Kingdom of Heaven in his heart. The Kingdom of Heaven of which Jesus speaks, that Kingdom of Heaven which begins on earth, and is not interrupted by death but only elevated.

Perhaps now you think, my friend, that such a state means renunciation of the joys of this world. On the contrary it augments and purifies the joys of this world. Life according to the laws of nature, guided by the divine light of reason, will make the body healthful, the heathful body will enjoy nature innocently and gratefully, no satiety will follow the calm joys of the senses. Because such a person is peaceful, he will have but few enemies ; because he is helpful, he will not stand alone in the time of his need ; because he is just, he will not fear judgment ; because he is humble, he will be raised, without fearing humiliation by strangers.

Riches and honour give him little care, because he sets little value on them ; the future of his children causes him but little uneasiness because they are well educated, and if one is a failure through no fault of his, he trusts it to the guidance of the Lord. The worst evils that drive others to despair are powerless to attack him, his soul is full of simplicity and cheerfulness, and the keen vivid enjoyment is a proof to him that he lives according to the will of God.



Heaven carefully avoided by so many is something like this. This is the Heaven of the peaceful. Now there are fighting temperaments, which, apart from the struggles for their personal improvement, must always be fighting with and for something. Let them struggle in God's name for their freedom, their fatherland, their nation, for what they consider to be truth, but they shall fight with pure hearts and faithful weapons and with confidence in the final victory of all good—then they too will have that holy innocent cheerfulness of heart—which is the Kingdom of God.

It is not as if this were so very difficult to acquire in our social life, as if it were hardly possible to accustom oneself to live in such a Kingdom of Heaven. It is not possible to mankind from one day to the other, but in the course of time when teachers and guides lead in this direction, it is assuredly to be obtained, the more easily because our longing for continual happiness is ever awake. For the present the individual must get accustomed to such a way of thinking—and many a one will succeed. We must often repeat to ourselves how senseless is our chase for wealth and honour, how incomparably more contented, more healthful, finer and grander we should be if a natural simplicity of life sufficed us, if the opinion of strange, unreliable people did not stand higher for us than our conscience, and if we were not devoured by hatred and vindictiveness. Added to that a little benevolence for everybody and absolute faithfulness



in love and friendship, in action and way of living—and the Kingdom of Heaven stands firm.

Not, of course, the perfect one. There are always people unfavourably constituted, who cannot attain an innocent cheerfulness of heart in spite of the noblest manner of living. And yet, even there, what a difference between a good-natured and an ill-natured hypochondriac or pessimist. It is certainly difficult for the latter to grasp that great redeeming trust, and yet I know more than one who after having conquered trust in God, has come from darkness into the sunshine, as if trust acquired by a strong will could even change the temperament !

To every one the heaven he deserves. That was said long ago, and I add : To every one a heaven he desires. As different as human potentialities, desires and fulfilments are in this life on a small scale, as different will they be in eternity. The peasant will really reap there the best crop, the soldier obtain the greatest victories, the humble in spirit find the sweetest peace, the lover of beauty behold the highest beauty. Let each one seek to perfect his capacities and predilections as much as possible and his perfection will be his Heaven.

In our span of time, this perfection, as I said, will not be reached, but by our faithful volition and uninterrupted striving for it, we approach nearer, from step to step, from life to life.

The Where we leave implicitly to the Lord of the



Universe. Also the How.—“No eye has seen it, no ear heard it, into no man’s heart has it come, what God has prepared for them that love Him.” What is the use of much talking and brooding? Nothing but contradiction and contradictions. Only ask a single-minded heart. If ever, my trusting friend, you have an inwardly very happy hour, be it after a noble deed of self-sacrifice for your fellow-creatures, be it in contemplation of nature, be it in the consciousness of Sonship to God, be it that you see you are succeeding more and more to live according to the will of God—in short, if you feel within yourself a happiness that has nothing to do with earthly things and interests, a happiness, that is quite selfless and spiritual, you need only imagine this happiness increased into the infinite, and you have an idea of what it will be like in Heaven.



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